No. 256 / JUNE 1994

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The **New Internationalist** magazine is published by New Internationalist Publications Ltd which is wholly owned by the New Internationalist Trust and co-operatively run by: *Vanessa Baird, Chris Brazier, Wayne Ellwood, Nikki van der Gaag, Alan Hughes, Jana Mahalingam, Gill Moore, Clive Offley, David Ransom, James Rowland, Richard Swift, Dexter Tiranti, Jim Turner, Alison Ware, Troth Wells.*

The **New Internationalist** magazine was founded by Peter and Lesley Adamson in 1970.

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Canada: 35 Riviera Drive, Unit 17, Markham, Ontario L3R 8N4. Tel. (905) 946-0407 Fax.(905) 946-0410
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EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES

UK: 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW. Tel. (0865) 728181. Fax. (0865) 793152. [Advertising: Tel. (0384) 373421. Fax. (0384) 441904]

Canada: 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M6H 1M1. Tel. (416) 588 6478. Fax: (416) 537 6435.

Australia: 7 Hutt Street, Adelaide, S.A. 5000. Tel. (08) 2321563

MAILINGS

Occasionally we allow organizations to mail our subscribers. If you do not wish to receive their material please write to your subscription office.

The **NI** is printed by Cradley Print Ltd, Warley, West Midlands, UK.

The **NI** is distributed to the UK news trade by COMAG Specialist Division, Mercury Centre, Central Way, Feltham, Middlesex TW14 0RX. Tel. (081) 844 1000. Fax. (081) 751 2666.

The **NI** in North America (USPS 329-770) is published monthly by **New Internationalist Publications**, 1011 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6H 1M1. Marketing Services: Ian McKelvie, Box 506, Osgoode, Ontario KOA 2WO. Tel: (613) 826-1003. Fax: (613) 826-1141. US 2nd class postage paid at Lewiston, NY. US Post-master send address changes to: The **NI**, P O Box 1143, Lewiston, NY 14092. US Office of Publication, Lewiston, NY 14092. Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index, CPI CD-ROM, CPI Online, the Canadian Magazine Index, CBCA Online, CBCA OnDisc and the Alternative Press Index.

Syndication/Permissions: Sonja Singleton, Cover Stories, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1,UK.Tel: 071 278 2332. Fax: 071 837 1192.

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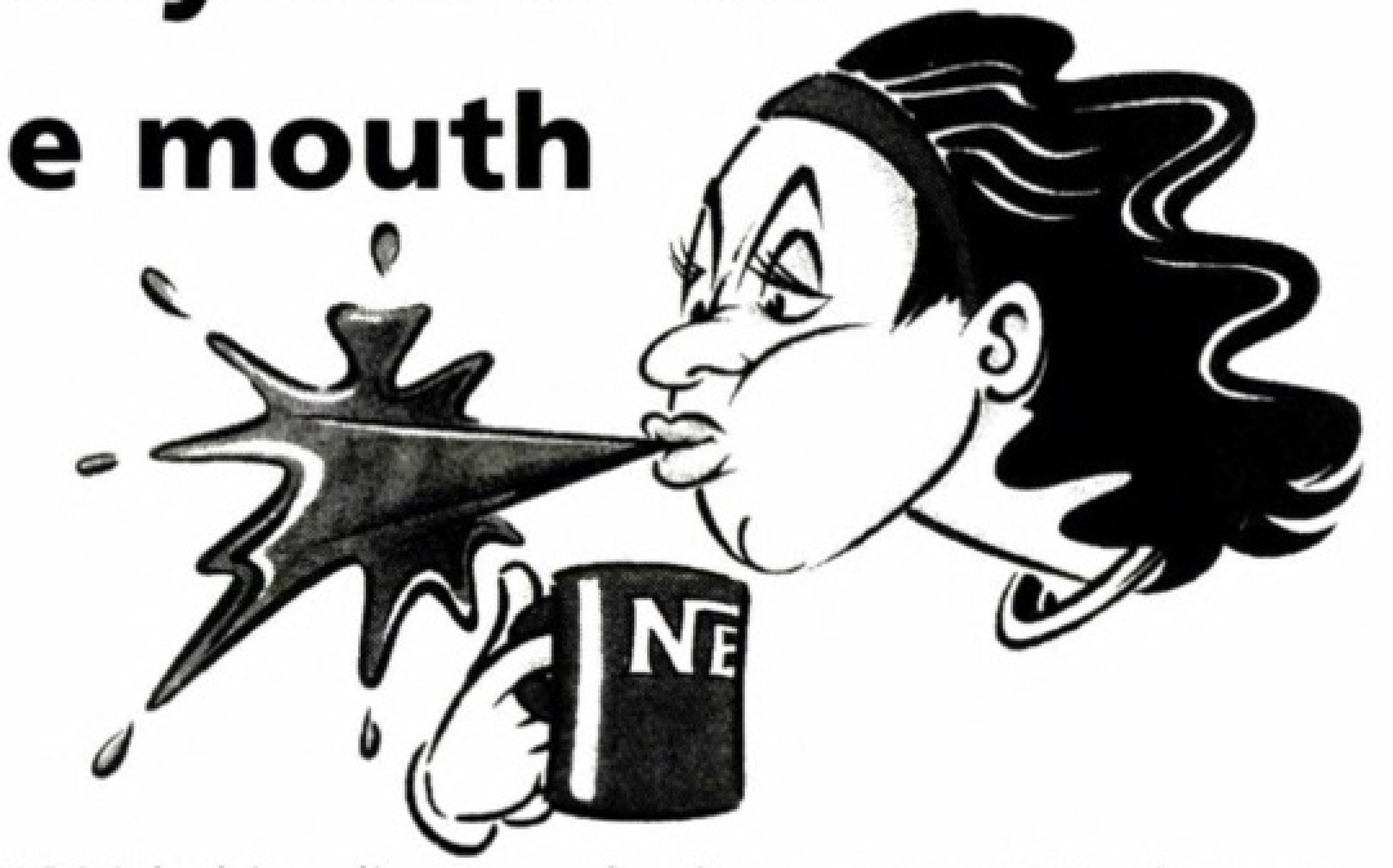

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AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

By **MORT ROSENBLUM,**
Special Correspondent,
Associated Press, Paris, France

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FRONT COVER BY **MARK MASON** INCLUDING PHOTO BY ARA GULER/MAGNUM. MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **CLAIRE PALMER.**

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Media

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

THE **NI** is a queer fish. The first queer thing about it is that it is not lying deeply lodged inside the guts of some shark-featured media empire. A free-swimming fish is a rare thing these days. The second queer thing about it is that it survives because of you, its subscribers, not its advertisers – which is lucky because most commercial advertising does not get past its ethical gills anyway. This freedom isn't just nice. It is vital to the survival of an independent magazine.

Here's a salutary tale. In 1967 the staid *New Yorker* magazine started running articles criticizing US involvement in the Vietnam War. It opened eyes. The magazine began to attract a new, younger, more liberal readership. The audience grew – and magazine profits plummeted. What happened was that the advertisers pulled out. The *New Yorker* was now attracting the wrong kind of reader, they complained. Not the kind with disposable income to spend on Rolex watches and the like.

This is unlikely to happen to the **NI**. And the idea behind this issue of the magazine does seem to fit with the publication's alternative ethos. We decided to do the stories that no-one else wanted to do – for whatever reason. In principle it seemed simple: the trays that circulate around the editorial office are always overflowing with newsletters from action or pressure groups containing the seeds of such stories. As well as telling the stories that don't get told we would provide some analysis of why they don't get told.

There was a warm response from the action groups and organizations I contacted. Ideas for articles began taking shape. But what I hadn't reckoned with was how **NI**'s long lead-in time might create problems. It takes about 16 weeks to produce a magazine from start to finish – plenty of time for an untold tale to, for some reason, finally make it into the news. For example, the situation in Burma had been well out of the news for some time and this made it a likely candidate for inclusion. Then it suddenly popped up and stayed in the press for several days.

I began getting a bit cagey when talking to people about the planned contents of the magazine. In fact, by trying to do something unusual – running the stories nobody else wanted to – I was lapsing into the possessiveness and competitiveness much more typical of mainstream journalists. My response to a pressure group eagerly telling me it was finally getting TV coverage for one of 'my' untold stories became somewhat mixed. Er... maybe the mainstream wasn't doing so badly after all. It was *good* that these issue was being aired at last – but I couldn't pretend it was making my task any easier.

Perhaps by the time you read this you will have come across one of these so-called untold stories elsewhere. Well, I'm now inclined to say, so what? If it's important a second telling won't do any harm. What I am more concerned about is all the stories that have been left out. Perhaps we should do an issue on...

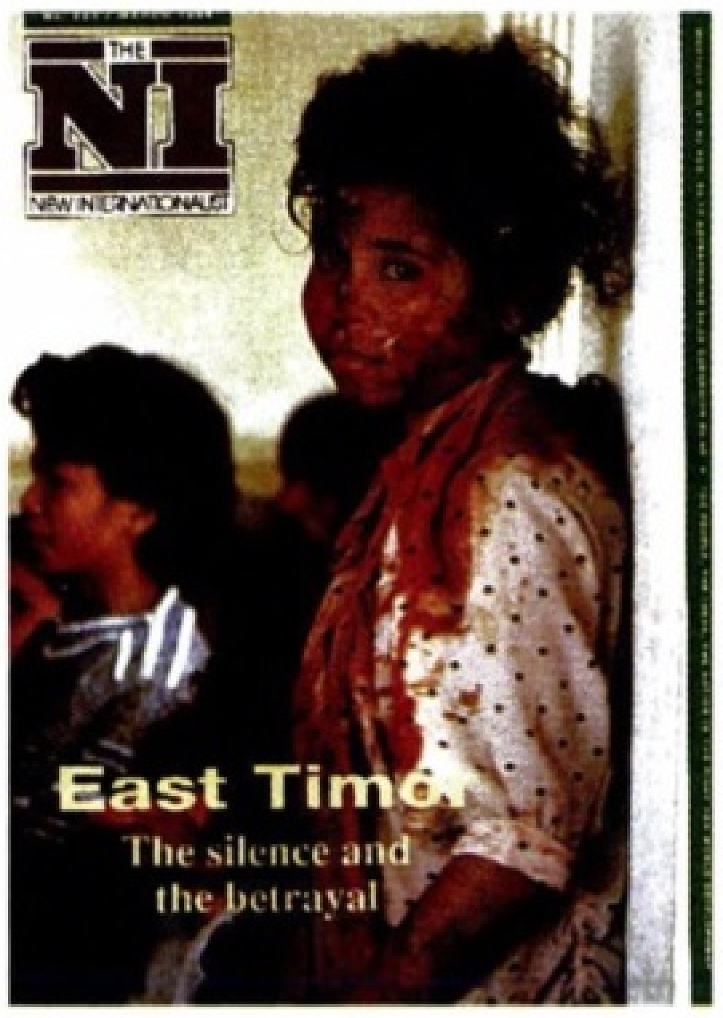
Vanessa Baird

Vanessa Baird
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Blind eyes

There were two additional issues that deserved some attention in your issue on *East Timor* **(NI 253)**. The first is the creation of the Suharto junta in Indonesia itself. General Suharto took power in Indonesia after an attempted coup by the communist PKI in September 1965 failed, and the Right retaliated with an all-out killing spree that left at least 500,000 dead. It is well documented that at that time Western diplomats deliberately turned a blind eye to the killings: Indonesia has since been a haven for Western capital and arms.



The second is the question of what is going on in Irian Jaya (West Papua) which has also been swallowed by the vast Indonesian archipelago against the wishes of its people. Contemporary reports suggest that what is going on there is slower and more subtle than in East Timor. But the desired end result by the rich generals in Jakarta is the same: the eradication of the people and their culture.

Tom Farrell
Dublin, Republic of Ireland

Genocide

Unfortunately the reviewer of Branka Magas's *The Destruction of Yugoslavia: Tracing the Break-Up* **(NI 253)** is not quite right when s/he says that Bosnia's Muslims are the first people in Europe to face genocide since World War Two.

The first victims of Serbia's policy of wholesale genocide were the non-Serbian populations of those areas of Croatia occupied by Serbia during the invasion of 1991-92. Much of the area now occupied by Serbia had a Croatian majority before the war, including the whole of eastern Slavonia; there were also considerable numbers of Hungarians and other minorities. All of these people have either been slaughtered or driven out, leaving only the Serbian minority behind (remember Vukovar?).

The United Nations Protection Force has been in this country for almost two years now; their prime mandate is to return refugees to their homes. The total number of Croats and Hungarians returned to their homes by the UN is zero.

As your moving issue on East Timor shows, this is not the only part of the world where the UN has tolerated genocide or even lent its tacit support. But what else can we expect when the UN chooses to hide behind euphemisms like 'ethnic cleansing'?

Marc Jeffery
Zagreb, Croatia

A new basis

Having worked as a street educator with street children in Guatemala City, the article 'Home Truths' in your issue on *Prostitution* **(NI 252)** had special significance for me. Of all the girls I knew on the streets, 99 per cent used sex as a means of survival. Many of these girls fled their *pueblos* in their early teens in search of a better life; some were ordered by their parents to leave their homes to make money; most did not realize that their survival would depend on their ability to market their sexuality. They see schoolgirls in uniform and envy that position; they feel shame at having to sell themselves. If this is the case, then why, as Black points out, are 'many efforts to save or rehabilitate "fallen girls" conspicuously unsuccessful'? From what I have seen, the reason for this failure is that girls begin to see themselves as valuable only in terms of their ability to provide sex. Once this happens, they feel worthless. My biggest fear is that through the legalization of prostitution the law will teach them that society assigns them that worth as well. A new basis for identity and survival must be offered, one which relies on education and cultural identity rather than sex.

Kristina McNeff
Tucson, Arizona, US

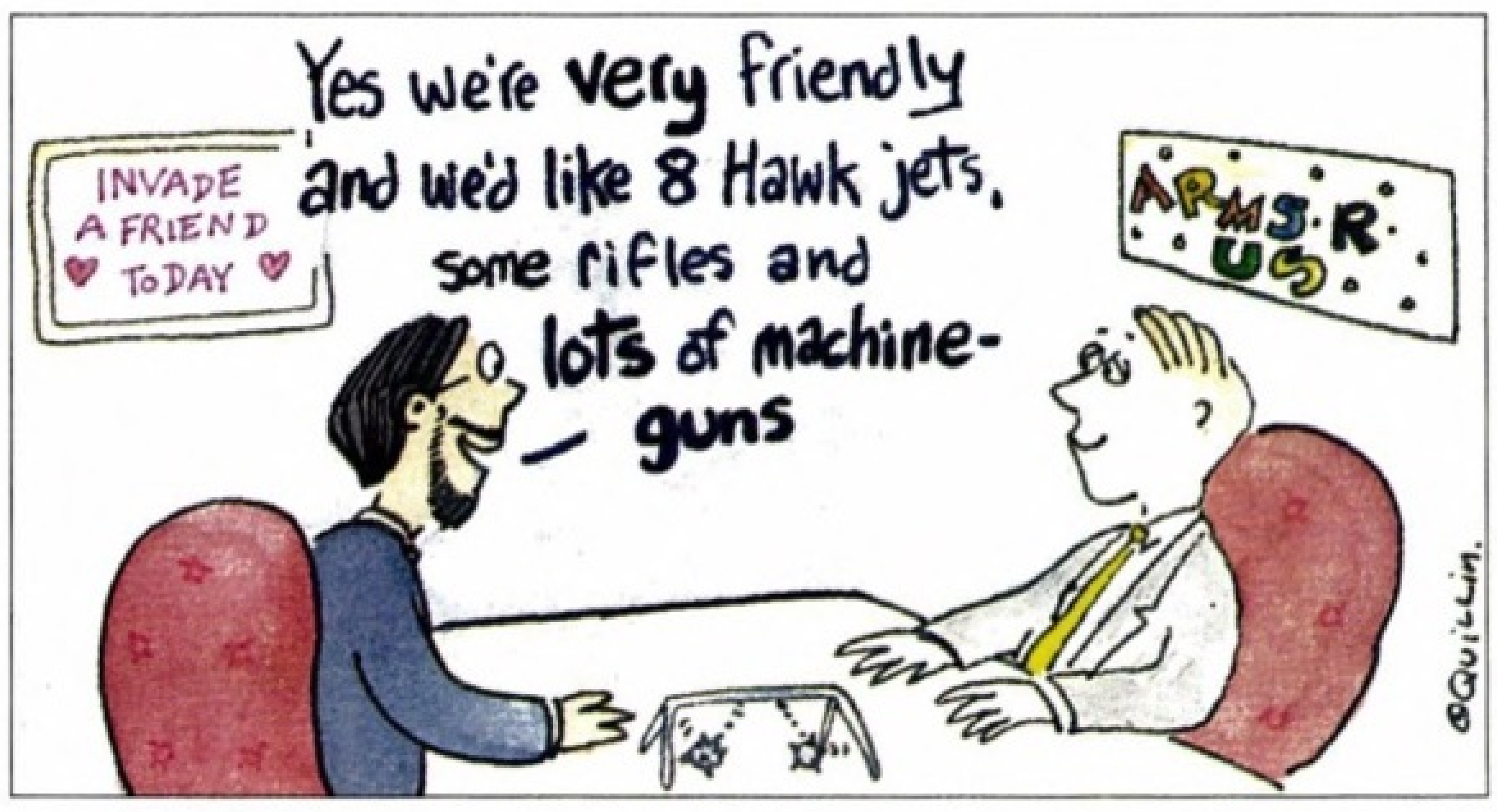
Government-speak

Readers may like to know the official UK Government 'line' on East Timor. I quote from a letter sent by the Overseas Development Administration: 'It is quite wrong to suggest that the widespread abuses of human rights in the 1970s persist in East Timor today. Indonesia's more recent human-rights record may not be perfect. But progress is being made and crucially the Indonesian Government has declared its commitment to human rights.'

I am sure this 'commitment to human rights' must be greatly appreciated by the East Timorese people still under constant attack and harassment! I am sending copies of relevant parts of your last issue to the ODA and await their response.

Sue Robertson
Edinburgh, Scotland

Editor: We shall be returning to the arms trade in our November issue.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Not North or South

Your substitution of North/South for rich/poor as applied to countries is deplorable. Not only is it an abuse of the English language, it is very insulting to residents of Australia, Aotearoa/NZ and South Africa.

Most of the poor countries are in the Northern Hemisphere. Most of Africa, all of Central America, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Burma, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Somalia, Ethiopia, Venezuela, Mexico, Haiti, Cuba – all very securely NORTH. Will you want to refer to Siberia as the 'South' if it gets any poorer?

Words have specific meanings and I suggest you use them correctly.

David L Giles
Broadford, Australia

Obscene review

I disagree with the five-star rating review of the album called *Born to Choose* **(NI 251)**, a group of tracks all with pro-abortion themes.

It amazes me that the reviewer seems not to appreciate the irony of what she writes: the title *Born to Choose* when abortion kills the unborn, and they have no choice, and that the album's proceeds are earmarked for women's health organizations, when abortion is harmful to women's health.

The illustration is quite simply obscene. The review is an aberration in a magazine committed to social justice.

Michael Leydon
Gisborne, Aotearoa/New Zealand

The first liberty

How can so many intelligent writers on *Liberty* **(NI 249)** suffer from the same blind spot? All the talked-about freedoms (of speech, assembly, information etc) pale into insignificance when compared to the freedom to use the earth itself. Our so-called human-rights advocates continue to ignore what Henry George pointed out a century ago – that land and natural resources should be the *equal and common inheritance* of all humanity. Tolstoy and Einstein also threw in their support for George's proposed imposition of full taxation of land values, which would bring about land justice as well as paving the way for the elimination of taxes on production.

When Afro-Americans were given their 'freedom' after the American Civil War they soon realized that it meant little to them as long as someone else 'owned' their share of the Earth. In the industrialized North today, it is crippling land prices and rents going into private pockets which similarly curtail our freedom.

Karl Williams
Melbourne, Australia

Horror unsanitized

I feel I must defend what amounted to good journalism in response to Simon Munro's letter criticizing the issue on *Human Rights* (**NI 247**) for being too shocking.

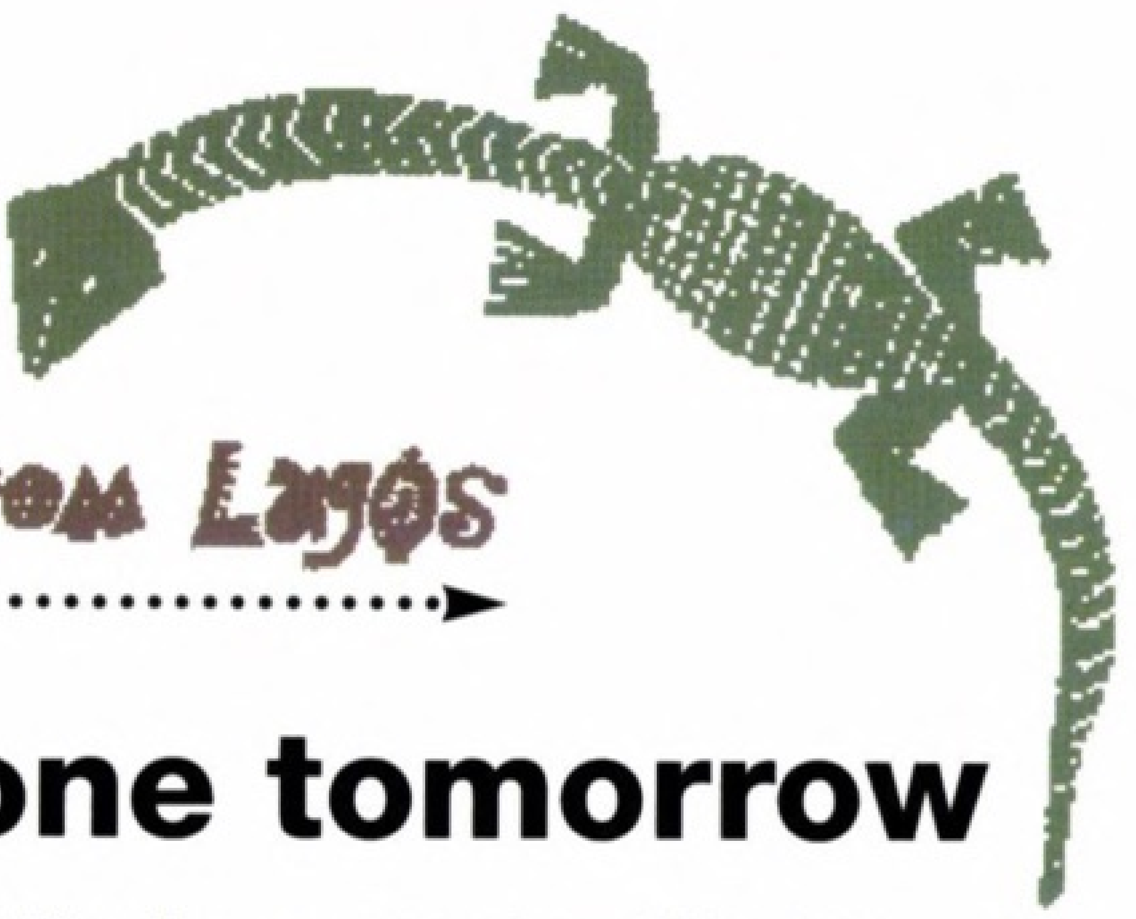
It is the role of television, politics and religion to gloss over hard truths and to make us all feel comfortable in our ignorance. Though the printed word has generally suffered the same fate, it should not be allowed to do so without a fight.

I recall being in a minority with newspaper colleagues many years ago in England over this very issue when the consensus on whether or not to print what the National Front said in private – ie its *real* agenda as opposed to its public pronouncements – was that it was far too offensive for 'public tastes'. I still believe the organization would have garnered fewer votes had people been given a clear picture of its true aims.

Anyone who wants a sanitized version of horror can find it with no effort. So please **NI,** for those of us who read the magazine because it provides the often-unpalatable truths, never depart from your chosen path.

Christopher Innocent
Emu Plains, New South Wales,
Australia

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.



Letter from Lagos

Fuel today, gone tomorrow

Stuck in a petrol queue, **Elizabeth Obadina** contemplates Nigeria's national petrol shortages.

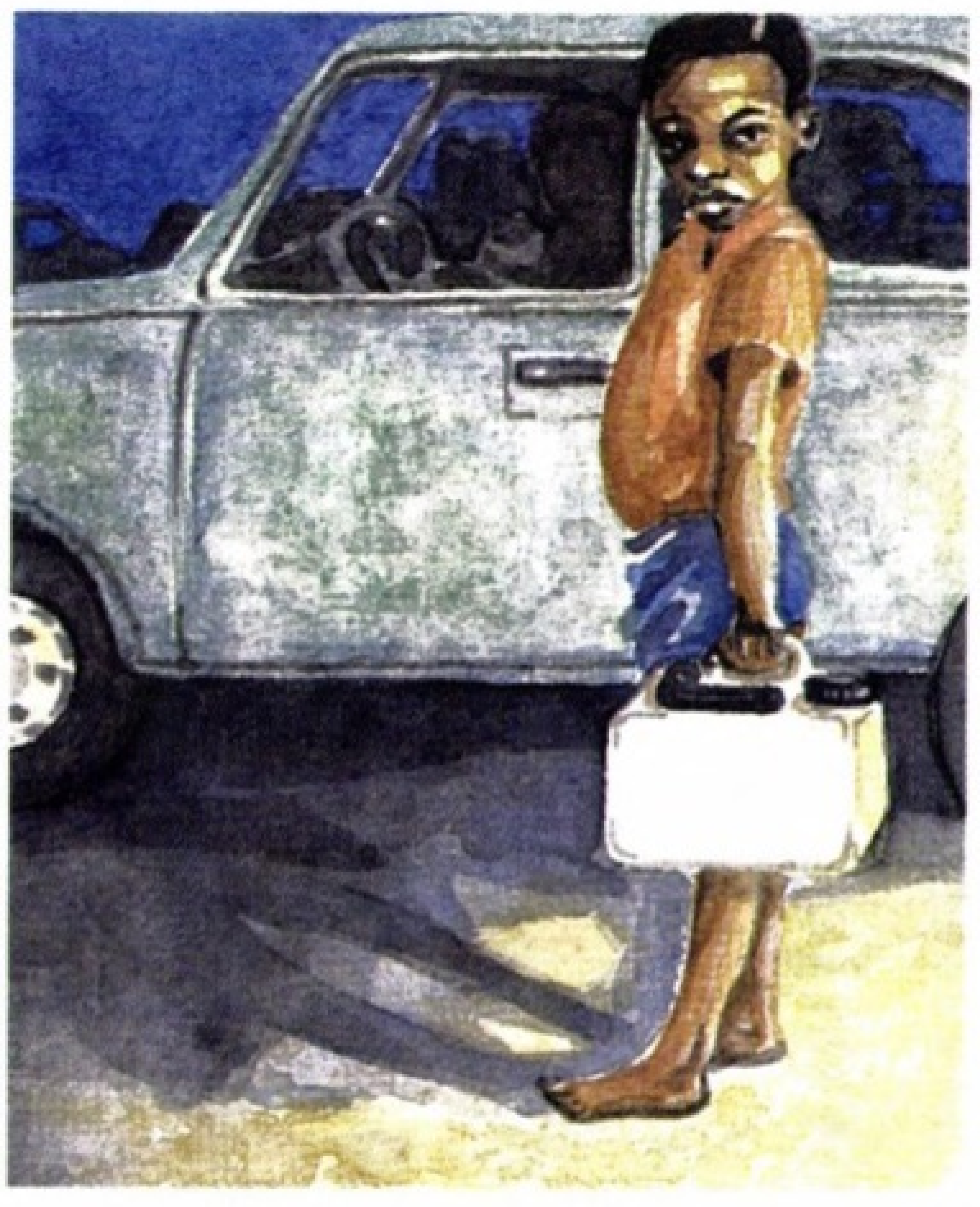


ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM McCURDY

For the first time ever my three kids travelled to England by themselves for the Easter holidays. My anxiety levels were high. Would they manage to negotiate the maze of officialdom and touts at the international airport without being either relieved of their passports or their sterling pocket money? Would British Airways bump them, as *naira* ticket holders, off the flight in favour of passengers holding tickets bought in hard currencies? The airline had been waging war for weeks on passengers who refused to buy their tickets in dollars or pounds because the Government refused to convert British Airways' substantial *naira* profits into scarce foreign exchange. Would my daughter, a diabetic, pass out in the airport and would her brothers be able to cope if she did, because no-one else would know what to do?

We set off on the ten-minute drive to the airport at 9.00pm. Ample time for a flight not due to leave until nearly midnight. But at 10.00 pm on a Saturday night we were enmeshed in the traffic jam to end all traffic jams just two miles short of our destination. Should we get out and walk? With luggage? Around an unlit airport perimeter road? And why the traffic jam anyway? Even Lagos has times and places when the traffic could be expected to flow freely and this was such a time and place.

We had fallen foul of a dreaded fuel queue, if queue is the word to describe the average Nigerian's desperate battle for petrol once word gets around that such-and-such a station has received a fuel delivery. In this case the filling station on the airport access road had received fuel. The 'airforce boys' had not yet arrived to whip motorists into an orderly line – to preserve access to their base – and frantic cars were besieging the pumps from all directions. Here and there children's heads popped out from behind car boots and bonnets or poked through the thickening, neon-lit fumes from car exhausts. Swinging empty plastic jerrycans, these children had been sent out to try their luck with the petrol-pump attendants who are under strict instructions not to sell fuel in jerrycans.

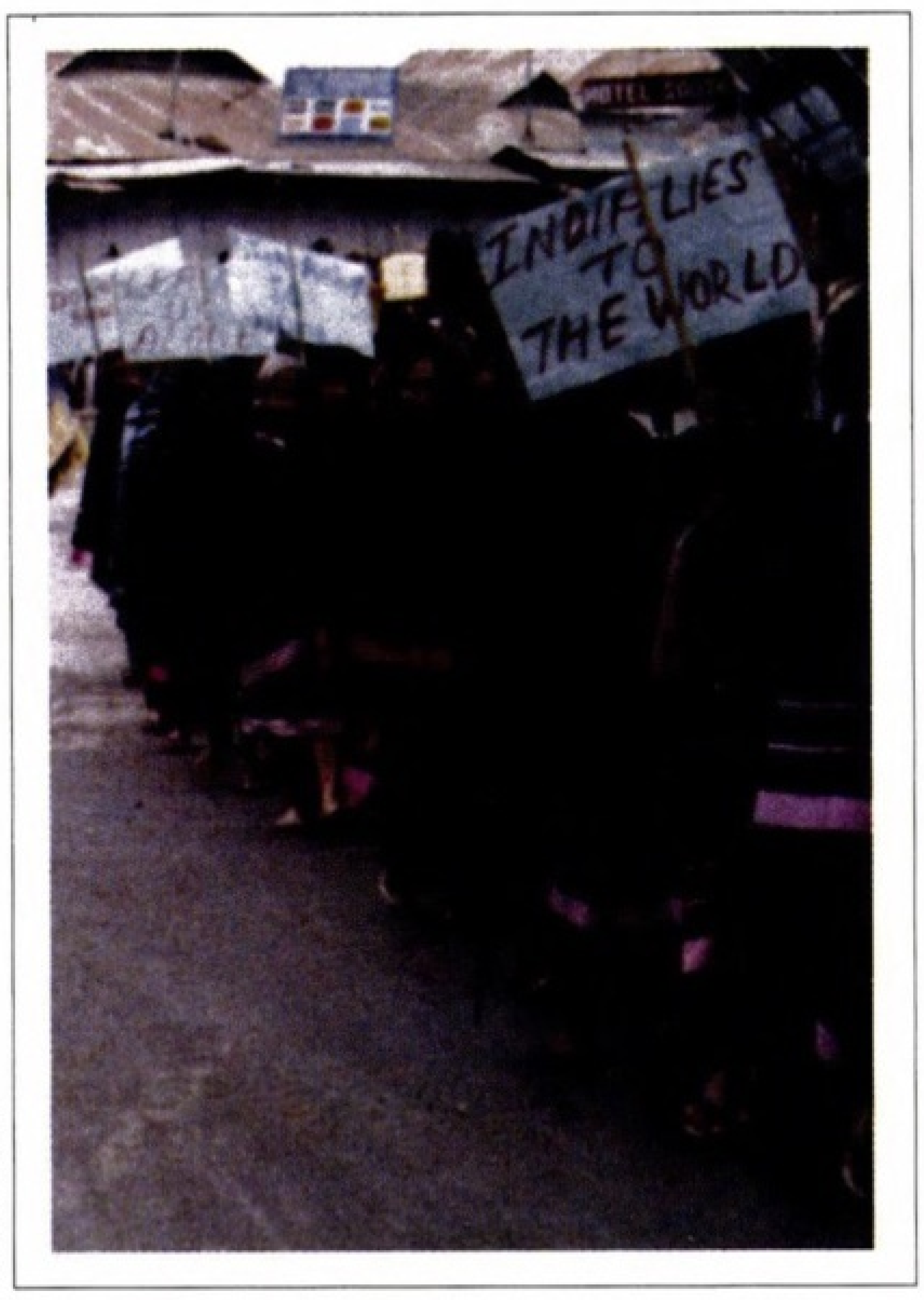
Just a few months ago there was a dreadful disaster in the central Nigerian city of Jos, when an overpressed attendant dropped his fuel can amongst the throng of jerrycan customers and besieging vehicles. The petrol was immediately ignited by the running car engines and the whole station blew up like a fireball, burning customers, staff and neighbours beyond recognition. Since then the law against selling in jerrycans has been enforced, with the result that motorists siphon petrol from their tanks and store it in jerrycans at home against the inevitable day when fuel is once again in short supply.

Nigerians simply can't understand why the one resource the country wallows in – top quality crude oil – is in such constant short supply. Shortages in the north of the country have been chronic for years as petrol dealers collude with smugglers to ship Nigerian petrol into francophone West Africa, where it sells for more than 10 times the price it fetches at home. The IMF says Nigeria should raise its petrol prices to raise revenue at home and stem smuggling. Nigerian petrol costs less than 14 US cents per litre and is among the cheapest in the world. But Nigerians, who for the most part only earn between 15 and 20 US dollars a month, aren't prepared to pay anything more for their petrol. Such a rise is just a cue for price increases and inflation is already running past 100 per cent. Besides which, they reason, why should the fruits of oil sales which provide around 90 per cent of Nigeria's income, be limited to the tiny ruling clique of military officers, government officials and businessmen who control the economy? Nigeria's oil is its national cake from which everyone expects a cut. The army had to be brought onto the streets in 1988 to control the protests which greeted former president General Ibrahim Babangida's six-per-cent petrol price increase. Since then the economy has grown steadily worse and the military hold on power more tenuous. No ruler relishes courting chaos by tampering with fuel prices.

But the professionals in the oil business are united in their concern to raise the money needed to rehabilitate the four refineries, most of which are barely operational. Without such major investment, they argue, there may indeed be oil today and for some years to come but there certainly won't be any fuel for sale tomorrow. And on the subject of tomorrow, Sunday morning found the kids in London and Tunde and me engaged yet again in Nigeria's newest national pastime: sitting in a petrol queue. ■

Elizabeth Obadina is a freelance writer and journalist living in Lagos.

Spiked!


INDIA LIES TO THE WORLD

NAGA VIGIL

Why do so many news stories never make the news?
***Vanessa Baird** examines some of the obstacles in their way.*

'Is he a local man?' I can hear his voice now. George, the affable, chain-smoking, cricket-loving news editor on the local paper where I cut my journalistic teeth.

Always the same first question, with the odd variation including words like 'woman', 'girl' or 'boy'. An able gatekeeper, foil to eager cub-reporters trying to push through stories just outside the region. Really good stories. Sometimes even 'important' stories. But not 'our patch'.

Sometimes there were ways around George. Like: 'I think his/her mother lives around here'. 'Check it out!' would come the reply, phone in each hand as he checked out the cricket score.

Sometimes you would do the story anyway, in your spare time. But if it strayed off the patch of what was deemed suitable for a middle-of-the-road family newspaper it would find its way onto the fearsome spike that graced George's desk.

Years later, when working as a journalist in Peru, I realized that George's solidly parochial attitude to journalism was not restricted to the news desks of the UK provincial media.

It affected all the media, including the foreign desks of the quality press and broadcasting networks. And it cropped up in many different forms.

Although events in Peru had first-rate news value on the ground, getting the rich world's newspapers interested was almost impossible. A Maoist insurgency that was pushing the country to the brink of civil war was not of interest – an interview with a British drug smuggler in a Lima jail was.

There are many places in the world that fail to make the news because they do not connect with rich-world interests. It takes something massively appalling, like the recent massacres in Rwanda, for them to make their transient mark upon the Western consciousness.

But sometimes stories don't get told simply because those in power make damned sure they don't and the media gatherers lack the clout, resources or inclination to investigate further. Nagaland is one such case, and the authority concerned is the Government of India.

Out of sight

On a high plateau against a brilliant blue sky, villagers are gathering. Behind them rolling green hills that stretch over the border and into Burma. The area is prime National Geographic Magazine territory to look at – the sort of place that might unwittingly be described as 'unspoilt'.

The film quality on this smuggled videotape – there are around 60 hours of it – is poor. But it's the closest a journalist is likely to get to what is going on. The area has – with a few exceptions – been closed to foreigners since it was annexed by India in 1954.

By my side is Yongkong, a Naga who has been in exile in London since the 1960s.

He watches the film quietly; the villagers gathering to give their testimonies, one by one. A woman in white describes what the soldiers did to her children. A man, a rice grower, twists and turns as he re-enacts the various forms his own torture took – finally opening his mouth to the camera and showing the place where his teeth were before the Indian soldiers plucked them out with pliers.

Testimony after testimony, the horrors unfold.

A teenage girl weeps by the grave of her executed brother. She has had to replace the tombstone several times – each time to be vandalized again by Indian army forces. A man describes how nails were driven into his eyes. There is plenty that people do not talk about in front of the camera. That comes out in written testimonies. Mass rape is used as a systematic weapon of abuse. People of both sexes are subjected to a humiliating public torture involving hanging upside down with chilli peppers inserted into their orifices.

Why is the Indian Government doing this? The reason is simple. The majority of the Naga people do not want to be part of India and that is perceived as a major threat to the fragile union of states that forms the modern nation. If some states are allowed independence others may want to follow suit and India will disintegrate, it is feared. Parallels with Kashmir have been drawn.

'It's not the same,' says Yongkong. 'Kashmir agreed to be part of India and recognized the Constitution. We never have.'

Nagaland was simply handed over – or betrayed – by the departing British in 1947.

'Do we look like Indians?' another Naga exile, Khodao Yanthan, rhetorically asks me.

The three million Nagas who inhabit the region are of Sino-Mongolian origin. Culturally, linguistically and physically they have more in common with the Karen people in Burma or even the Chinese than with the Indians. Indian troops – many from the notoriously undisciplined Assam Rifles – are taught that the Nagas are cannibals and head-hunters who must be dealt with accordingly. The result is pitiful.

In the words of one elderly Naga: 'They have destroyed everything that it is possible to destroy. How can we ever rebuild our lives?'

India's censorship of its war in Nagaland has been largely successful. Helped by geography, the Indian authorities have succeeded by making it a no-go zone. They have also saturated it militarily: there are 150,000 Indian troops stationed in Nagaland to fight a Naga resistance army of 3,000. As a result facts and figures to substantiate claims of human-rights abuses – the stuff journalists normally need in order to run a story – are patchy and hard to come by.

But in 1991 two human-rights activists smuggled their way into Nagaland and spent three months moving around the country collecting evidence.

David Ward and Steve Hillman visited 30 villages and recorded the testimonies I am now watching. It is probably the most thorough account available, and it communicates the warmth of these people as well as their plight.

The first targets for torture and execution are teachers, pastors – most Nagas are Baptist Christians – and women, according to David Ward. 'They go for people with influence in the community – and women are highly regarded,' he explains.

'...they found his story irresistible. It was really ironic. All David had wanted to do was get the world to focus on the Nagas, not on himself.'

Before he and Steve could begin to record experiences they had to gain the confidence of people who had no reason to trust foreigners.

'I started by telling them that as a British man I knew I was part of their problem and I was ashamed of this. It was my country that betrayed them in 1947 and was carrying on betraying them by failing to say anything about what was happening now.

'I listened to hundreds of testimonies. You could actually see the survivors unburdening themselves and transcending the ingrained barrier of fear-psychosis that has set in over many years.'

Finally, after months of successfully dodging Indian troops, their party was ambushed. One of their group – Neipielie Chucha – was killed by Indian soldiers. David and Steve were captured, imprisoned without trial in an Indian jail and were themselves tortured. Then, and only then, was the Naga Vigil human-rights group David had set up while still in Britain able to get Western media attention.

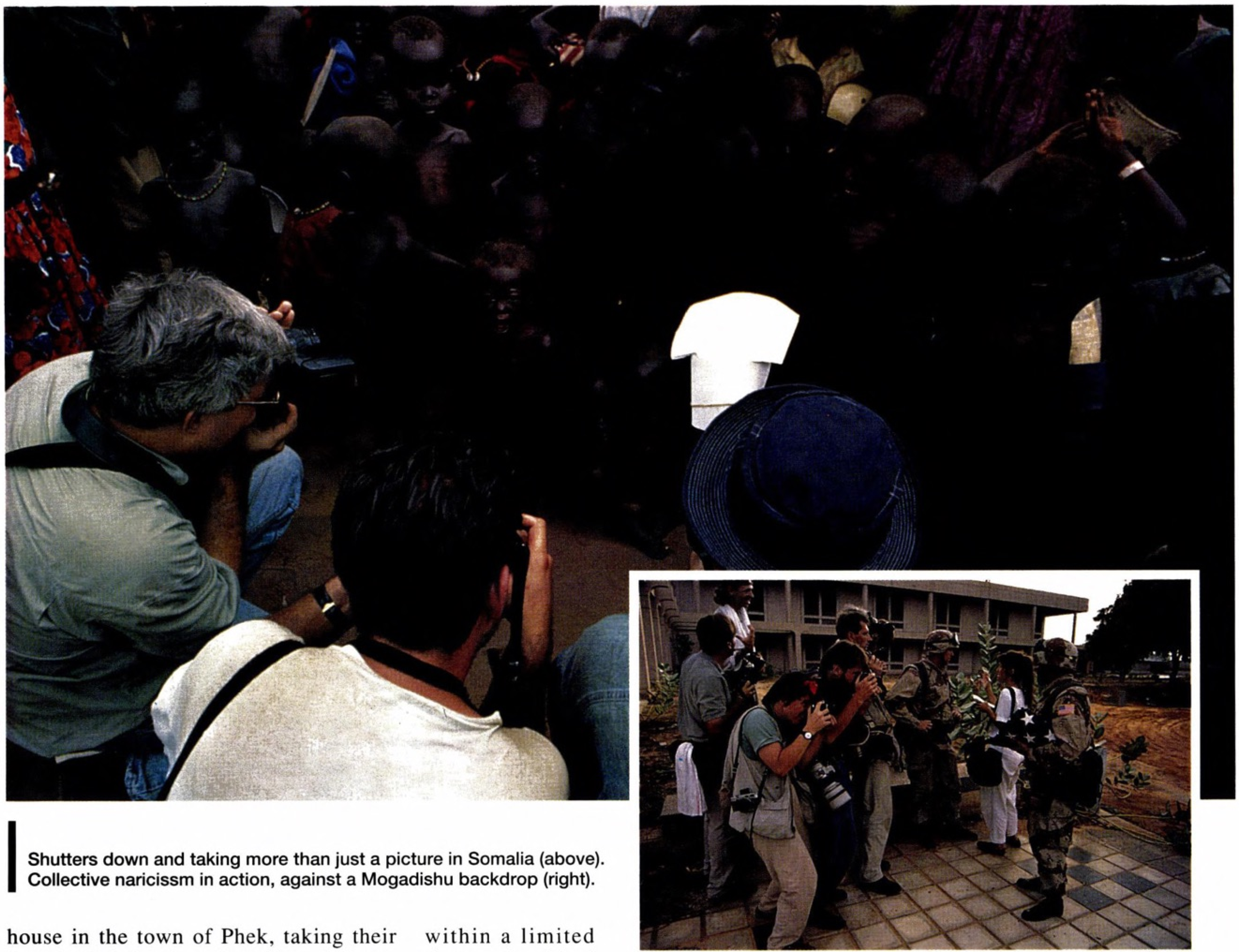
Miranda Watson, who led the campaign in Britain, recalls: 'It was very frustrating. It was David that most of the papers wanted to know about. Son of an Assam tea-planter, who set up Naga Vigil while in Gartree prison for robbery – they found his story irresistible. It was really ironic. All David had wanted to do was get the world to focus on the Nagas, not on himself .'

David and Steve were released from the Indian jail a year later, in March 1993 – after the intervention of British Prime Minister John Major.

But that was as far as the British Government wanted to go. Since 1993 the situation in Nagaland has steadily deteriorated, according to Naga Vigil who keep up regular correspondence with scores of local people. There are an estimated 1,000-1,200 people being detained without charge. Entire villages may at times become prison camps, cordoned off and denied water. But the people are resisting. A video film, taken by Nagas on a camera left behind by David and Steve, shows a demonstration of 30,000 outside a court-

Nagas protest against Indian lies (above left).
Faces blanked out to avoid recognition – and further brutality.
Survivors of torture line up before giving their testimonies (below).

NAGA VIGIL



ABOVE: SCOTT PETERSON / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES: RIGHT:DUCLOS-VAN DER STOCKT

Shutters down and taking more than just a picture in Somalia (above). Collective naricissm in action, against a Mogadishu backdrop (right).

house in the town of Phek, taking their lives in their hands as they chant 'We are Nagas, not Indians' and demanding the release of detainees.

In April of this year the British Legion managed to arrange with the Indian Government for a small group of relatives of British servicemen lost in the 1944 Battle of Kohima to visit the area. While there, British visitors were approached by local people telling them of their plight and begging for help. But the British and Indian organizers of the trip have since warned the visitors not to speak to the press about their experiences as this could harm Anglo-Indian relations. Meanwhile the official *Nagaland Journal* newspaper carries an interview with a British legionnaire who says how impressed he is that there is 'not a beggar in sight'.

'Strange,' comments David Ward sardonically, 'when the people are begging for their lives'.

Them and us

Even with easy access the story of the Nagas would not make an ideal news story. It's not 'new', for start. Good hard news combines novelty and drama, within a limited timescale. Ideal events are natural or political catastrophes such as aircrashes, earthquakes, cyclones, famines and coups.

When the Third World does break into the rich world's consciousness it is usually with one of these events. As a result Western perceptions of Africa, Asia and Latin America as zones of chaos and misery are often exaggerated. Peter Adamson, co-founder of **NI,** regularly gives 16- and 17-year-olds and their teachers a questionnaire asking them what percentage of the world's children are 'visibly malnourished'. The usual answer is 50-70 per cent. The true answer is one to two per cent.

One reason positive stories don't get told is because they tend to unfold slowly, undramatically. Increasing female literacy in a state in Bangladesh can't compete with a flood, although the links between a mother's education and her children's chances of survival are direct and proven and the number of lives saved by educating women is likely to far exceed lives lost in a flood.

Positive stories also tend to show people quietly getting on with development. But the mainstream Western media is hooked on narratives about its own people going out and saving the world. It's a form of collective narcissism that actually obstructs vision: you cannot see through mirrors. It's also inherently racist.

Nowhere has this been more clearly shown in recent times than in Somalia during the inappropriately-named Operation Restore Hope. A disaster that had been ignored by the West for the best part of a year suddenly made its way onto the agenda of the US Government. Starving Africans had to be helped – and, as guardians of the New World Order, the US and its marines leapt into action and took sides, with precious little knowledge of what they were going into.

The agenda of most news crews was even less inspiring. It was, in 'newsman's' parlance, a 'jug fuck', a 'kind of gang bang, but less orderly with too many reporters on one story'.[1]

In the competitive scramble for 'stick action' – images of undernourished children – the feelings and the interests of the

Somali people faded into insignificance. With all their expensive media technology news crews crammed into desperately under-equipped clinics, filmed starving children, interviewed recently-arrived Western aid workers and then left, ignoring the Somali doctors and nurses who had been there all along, working around the clock without pay.

Dominatech

Why is this happening? In the past foreign events were filtered through the old-fashioned newspaper correspondent. Now communications technology can give us the story straight from the horse's mouth. International journalism should be more authentic and representative than ever.

Some of it does excel. The BBC's George Alagiah, for example, used television to do some memorably sensitive reporting from Somalia before the media circus got there. But even the best journalists today face a new set of awesome obstacles, and technology may not necessarily be on their side. The round-the-clock coverage of Desert Storm took media technology to new heights – and journalism to new depths. Rarely have reporters covering a major world event been so deftly manipulated by political forces thousands of miles away – and become so detached from the people at the centre of the story.

Ed Cody of the *Washington Post* identifies the root cause: 'An avalanche of information comes out of the US Government. They do it with such intensity and such volume that almost automatically it becomes the definition of what is happening. Anyone in Saudi Arabia, in Kuwait, in Baghdad who has the temerity to approach the problem from a different angle, to say wait a minute, this is the situation, I am here, I'm talking to this person Mohammed and he tells me that it's this way – is simply ignored. That voice cannot compete with the volume of information coming out of what is essentially the US Government and its agenda.'[1]

This might not be so bad if governments and politicians could be relied upon to tell the truth – but they can't. It's the job of journalists to spot when they are lying. But if the press is neither sounding the alarm nor keeping record of the lies, then you end up with what Noam Chomsky identifies as a 'manufacture of consent' which enables millions of people to be duped by powerful governments.

North Americans were not the only ones taken for a ride by Desert Storm. According to Jonathan Benthall: 'Most British journalists involved in covering the Gulf War have since sworn they will never allow themselves to be manipulated as they were.'[2]

The question is: how much choice in the matter do they have?

A handful of huge media empires, such as Time Warner and Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, is rapidly gaining control of every conceivable communications means and outlet – from old-established independent newspapers to Hollywood studios to cable, satellite and telephone companies.

Journalist and academic Ben Bagdikian has vividly outlined the ideal scenario for today's media mogul, whereby a magazine article generates a TV series, a movie screenplay, a soundtrack, a hit single, cable re-runs and worldwide distribution of videocassettes. All the companies and players involved are, of course, owned by the mogul.

The best medium of communication remains, not the fibre-optic cable, but the common thread of humanity.

At a time when some developing countries, like Brazil, India, Korea and Uruguay are becoming prolific media and news producers there might be a real chance of realizing the 1970s dream of reversing the North-South flow of information. But, in the wake of the recent GATT free-trade agreements, the technology-rich Western media empires have *carte blanche* to flood and dominate world markets as never before.

Human stories, well told, can always communicate across cultural differences. But it took the Gulf War to highlight the plight of the Kurds.

Windows not mirrors

The media is too important for us to permit this concentration of power. A practical step would be to extend and apply anti-monopoly legislation or trust laws to restrict ownership. One news medium per owner would free up the market and the media to be more imaginative and more receptive to news from different perspectives – from the South, from women, from indigenous groups.

It may also allow more diverse forms of journalism to flourish. When you come down to it, any communicator worth their salt should be able to make us feel for another person's situation, whoever and wherever they are. The best medium of communication remains, not the fibre-optic cable, but the common thread of humanity. The moving, insightful and at times subjective work of some women war correspondents – such as Maggie O'Kane's eyewitness accounts from Bosnia for *The Guardian* – demonstrates the positive value of human-response journalism and of a fresh approach.

If, however, the media moguls have their way we are likely to end up with news from distant places and about other peoples only as an offshoot of commercial advertising.

It already happens. For the past 20 years the gradual genocide of the Buddhist Jumma people by Muslim Bangladeshi Government forces had been ignored in the mainstream media. Then, suddenly, in January 1994, the plight of the Jummas hit the news. Why? Hollywood star Richard Gere, himself a Buddhist, made a special plea for them while opening the winter sales at Harrods, London's most prestigious store.

It's good that he cares. But are we only going to hear such stories as part of another story about a famous shop and a Western celebrity who is, broadly speaking, 'a local man'?

Perhaps it's time for the dominant countries of the world and their media to junk the need to have reflections of themselves, their prowess and their preoccupations in all they see. That way we might end up with a media that is closer to what it has often grandly claimed to be – a window on the world. ■

VANYA KEWLEY

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[1] Mort Rosenblum, *Who stole the news?*, John Wiley (New York, Chichester, Brisbane, Toronto, 1993). [2] Jonathan Benthall, *Disasters, relief and the media*, IB Tauris (London, New York 1993).

WAR & PEACE

In the drama of conflict it's the killing, the killers and the killed that get the coverage. The tendency for media to take sides in a war is very strong: it's as if the public needs to know 'who are the good guys and who are the bad'. Meanwhile, the people who – behind the scenes and on either side of the conflict – are trying to lead a peaceful resistance against warmongering rarely make the headlines. Nor do those who try to put the pieces back together again and create a lasting peace once the worst of the fighting is over. This is partly because fighting and killing make more dramatic copy and produce more shocking and impactful images than the slow process of talking and negotiating. But it is the peace-makers who are the creators of the future.

One thorn bush at a time

***Rakiya Omaar** reports from Somaliland on how a peace has been quietly hatched in one of the world's most war-torn regions.*

NOTHING can prepare you for a visit to a hometown utterly destroyed by war. Especially not when 70 per cent of your hometown has been levelled to the ground by artillery shelling and aerial bombardment.

I had seen pictures and videos of the wasteland Hargeisa had become after a decade of destruction and neglect. But this did not blunt the shock of my first return visit to the Somaliland capital in June 1992. I was touched by the tenderness with which people tried to help me absorb my impressions without making a drama out of their misfortune.

This year I made a second trip back – and found a rather different Somaliland. In stark contrast with recent events in neighbouring Somalia, the main activity in Somaliland over the past year had been not war- but peace-making. And it had been achieved with precious little outside involvement or interest.

To communicate the scale of this achievement I must fill in some of the background of Somaliland's recent bloody history.

Up to 1991 Somaliland was a north-western province of Somalia. Local people – mainly of the Isaaq clan – felt they were not getting an equal share of the nation's resources in a country run from the southern capital of Mogadishu. In 1982 the northerners formed the Somali National Movement to promote a higher political profile.

The response from dictator Mohamed Siad Barre was to launch a sustained campaign of terror against civilians in the region. People were tortured, livestock slaughtered, villages razed, crops destroyed and the area strewn with landmines. Summary executions were commonplace. Thousands fled to escape violent and humiliating abuse.

But in 1988 the ill-equipped Somali National Movement rebels managed to take the cities of Hargeisa and Burao – much to the surprise of the Barre Government which reacted by pounding residential districts with artillery. Thousands died as their homes collapsed on them. Others were shot in their houses or as they ran for cover or tried to escape into the countryside. Soldiers patrolling the exits to the towns robbed, raped and murdered people as they fled. By mid-June almost the entire Isaaq population was either dead or had become refugees in Ethiopia.

When in 1991 Siad Barre was toppled after 21 years of dictatorship there was a feeling of euphoria. Somaliland seceded from Somalia and declared its independence. Relieved to be home, buoyed by the security that prevailed almost everywhere, people began to rebuild their lives. The economy took off, making it possible to begin the formidable task of reconstruction.

But the heady optimism ended abruptly in January 1992 when feuding between politicians and army officers erupted into open warfare, first in the town of Burao and then in Berbera, the principal port and the country's economic nerve centre.

'I wept when I saw what had happened to Burao and its people,' Sultan Abdi, the Vice-Chair of the Isaaq Elders Council told me. When their diplomacy failed to halt the fighting, Sultan Abdi and other elders went into the battlefield itself to stop the fighting. 'We could not find enough white flags to wave to get the shooting to stop, so some of us took off our shirts.'

When I visited the port of Berbera in July 1992 it was a virtual ghost-town. People were too discouraged, disoriented and uncertain about the future to start rebuilding their homes. Heavily-armed young men were everywhere. Travel was dangerous. The few foreign agencies had either closed their operations or evacuated their expatriate staff.

With the Government implicated in the fighting, the forces of peace had one option left. They rallied around traditional elders, the most enduring and accountable elements in Somali society. No other civic institution has the political clout or the moral authority of the elders.

Resolving conflict was nothing new for the elders, who are experienced professional negotiators. Their position of elders is not hereditary – their power comes from the authority their clan has delegated them to manage the clan's affairs. They are chosen by virtue of personal attributes such as age, a reputation for fairness, expertise in the political arts of compromise and persuasion, powers of oratory, skill as a poet, piety, religious knowledge, generosity and courage.

Using traditional mechanisms of arbitration, they began a painstaking process to end the armed conflict, establish a framework for mediating future disputes and bring about a peaceful change of government. They began with a series of peace conferences at the local level to iron out differences between clans.

The conflicts in Somalia and Somaliland have taken place mainly between neighbouring clans, making the violence an intimate affair that left communities deeply traumatized. It was a situation that called for patience, persistence and tact in overcoming a legacy of grief, anger, mistrust, guilt and shame.

The elders were guided by the Somali proverb: 'If you want to dismantle a hedge, remove one thorn bush at a time.' The order in which problems were tackled was critically important.

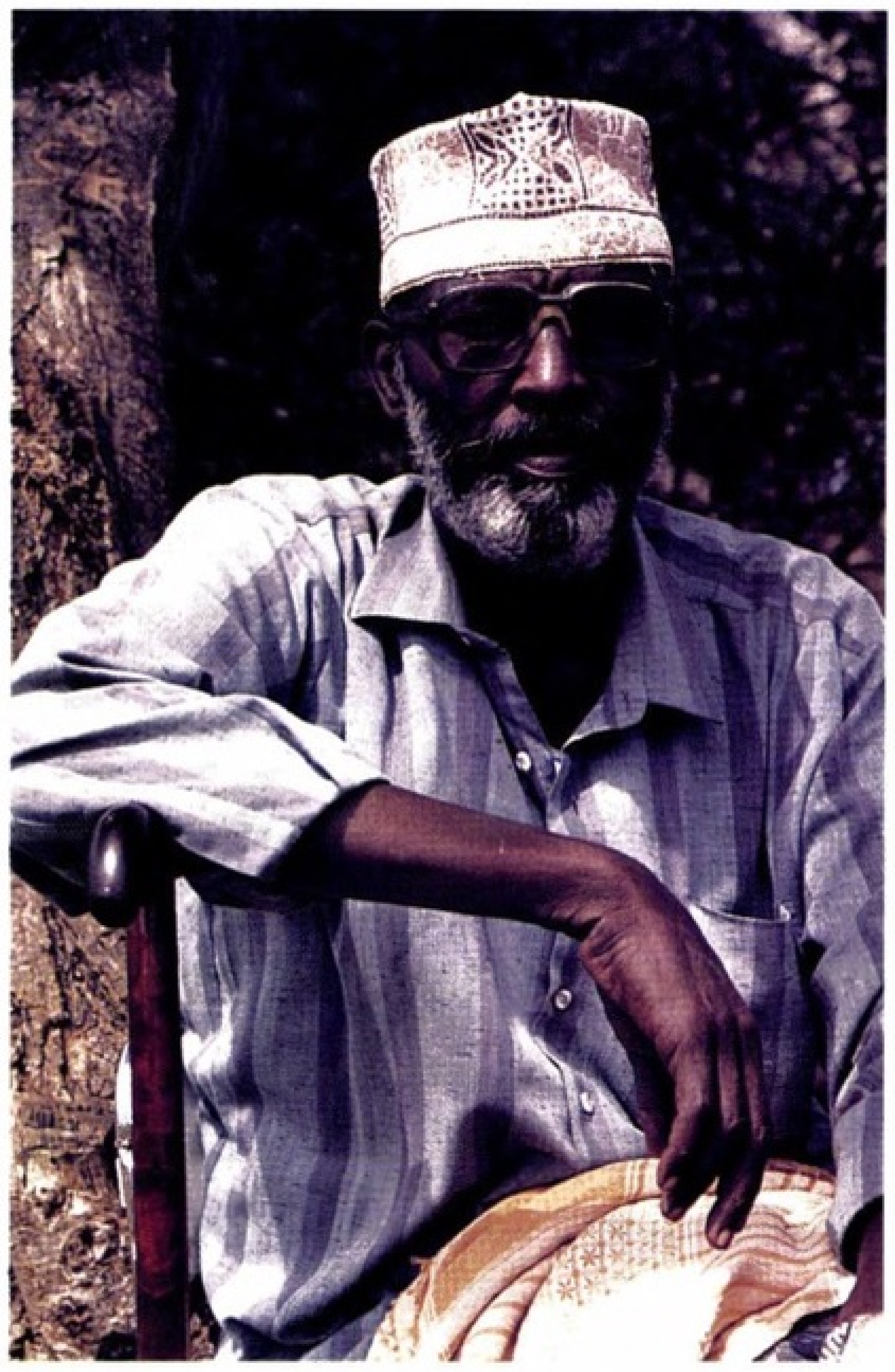
Neutral facilitators trusted by both sides provided the parties with lists of the elders planning to attend the conferences from the opposing side. Participants regarded as 'men of war' were weeded out, ensuring that the groups who met were confident of each other's goodwill.

Opponents were first encouraged to meet face to face to confront and overcome the bitterness and suspicions that divide them. To encourage an atmosphere of calm and to create incentives towards compromise, the opening days were devoted to social and religious events: 'You have to lower the temperature,' one elder explained. 'People cannot make peace if there is fire in their eyes and hate in their hearts.'

'What is the hurry?... the killings lasted for years. We cannot bring the dead back. But we can bring peace. If we hurry and fail, it is not only a betrayal of the future. It shows disrespect to the collective suffering of the past.'

The goal was reconciliation rather than vindication. Blaming either party as guilty in a public forum is regarded as a humiliation that allows grievances to fester and sets up barriers to concession.

There were no artificial deadlines. 'What is the hurry?' asked another elder. 'The killings lasted for years. We cannot bring the dead back. But we can bring peace. If we hurry and fail, it is not only a betrayal of the future. It shows disrespect to the collective suffering of the past.'



Hargeisa flattened by war (above); courage, skill and generosity bestow power on elders as peacemakers (right).

TOP AND BOTTOM: HAMISH WILSON / PANOS

Starting the peace process at a local level and keeping it within Somaliland was of crucial importance. 'Because everyone felt involved, everyone felt responsible,' commented Zamzam Aden Abdi, a Somali relief worker. 'Every elder will meet at least 20 people a day – in his home, on the road, at the mosque, at the teashop. He tells us what was said and decided; this makes its way into the grapevine. Everyone gives him his or her opinion. He takes our views back to the conference table. This could not happen if they were cooped up in some conference centre in Nairobi or Addis Ababa.'

Foreign mediation in Somalia has consistently ignored the fact that disputes over material resources lie at the heart of the conflicts in both Somalia and Somaliland. Unlike foreign mediators, the elders have a long familiarity with the history, geography and ownership of the resources in question. So local conferences concentrated on disputes about land, grazing rights, the return of houses and the exchange of stray livestock – trying to resolve such material questions at the local level before moving onto regional disputes.

The entire peace process culminated in a four-month national conference in Boroma in January 1993 which adopted a countrywide security framework, laid down a national constitutional structure, and effected a peaceful change of government.

The fruits of their efforts were apparent when I went back in January 1994. I was able to travel throughout the country, more afraid of landmines than gunmen. A friend who had contemplated leaving the country in 1992 was grateful he had stayed: 'We still have a long way to go, but yesterday and today – it is like night and day.'

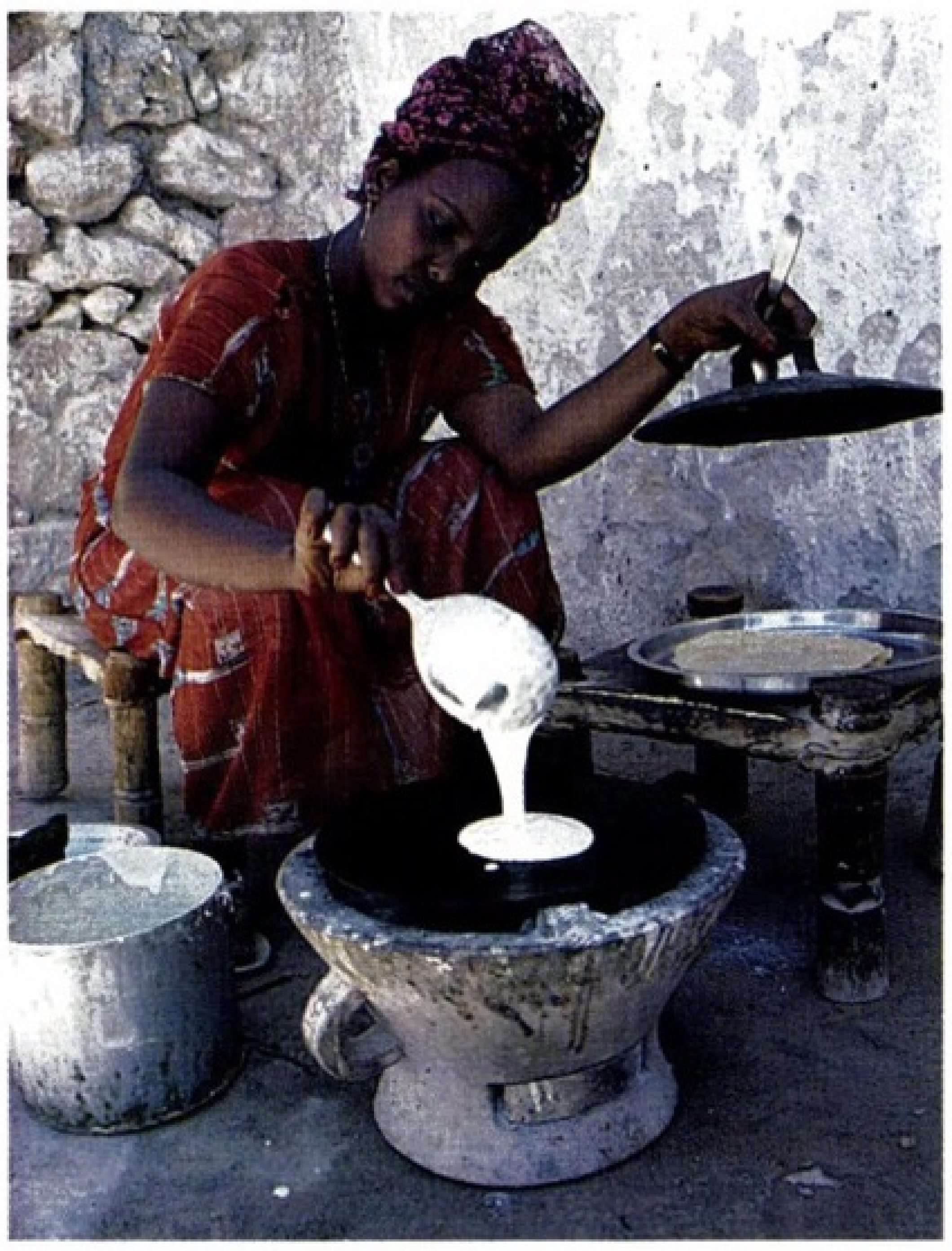
To describe the elders as the saviours of Somaliland is to miss the larger point of their achievement. They succeeded because ordinary people gave them the authority to make peace and promote reconciliation. In turn, they made their task a collective endeavour.

Traders, poets, women's groups, professionals, religious leaders and army officers were mobilized to finance, organize, deliberate, negotiate, implement and monitor an agenda for peace. Somali elders put into practice what thoughtful development specialists describe as the prerequisites for sustainable development: community support, participation in and ownership of the process, common goals, legitimate representation and a long-term process.

The elders' achievements are impressive. This is not to say that political tensions between different regions and clans have ended. But it does mean that there is a broadly-based political framework for resolving disputes in a peaceful manner.

None of this, however, can mask the fact that Somaliland has been completely destroyed by a decade of war. Its infrastructure has collapsed; the Government has no money. It cannot pay salaries, forcing experienced doctors, teachers and managers to seek jobs with foreign agencies. The police have virtually no transport or communications system. Thousands of heavily-armed young men – the greatest threat to security, peace and reconciliation – are unable to find employment.

Neither the Government nor the public can comprehend the refusal of the UN and donor countries to assist Somaliland. The folly of spending millions to wage a military conflict in Mogadishu while withholding the thousands that would sustain peace in Somaliland has given their criticism a sharper edge.


HAMISH WILSON / PANOS

Not for the news: a diet of peace in Somaliland.

The Secretary-General of the UN has made it clear that recognition of Somaliland is not on the agenda. The war that engulfed Somalia, and the absence of a central government, have delayed the day of reckoning. No one knows what the future holds. What is certain is that UN efforts to enforce unity will spark a new war and a new tragedy for the people of Somalia and Somaliland. ■

Rakiya Omaar is co-director of African Rights, a human-rights organization based in London. She was in Somaliland for six weeks in January and February this year.

Not our war

*Serb nationalists have become international pariahs. But are all Serbs nationalists? **Ivan Vejvoda** tells a story of resistance that rarely gets heard.*

About 50,000 people gathered for a rock concert in Belgrade's main square. The title of the concert was 'Don't Count On Us' – an abbreviated message to the nationalist regime of President Milosevic.

A few months later 40,000 people came out on the streets of Belgrade wearing black ribbons. The event this time was 'The Black Ribbon Mourning for Sarajevo' – in solidarity with the suffering of the city being besieged by Serbian forces.

The opposition of Serbs to Serbian nationalism has not been a focus of Western media. The latter has fallen prey to the need to portray conflicts in exclusively Manichean, good-versus-evil terms. Conflicts – and especially the one in former Yugoslavia – can rarely be understood in this way.

It may come as a surprise to many Westerners that there was a large, spontaneous opposition within Serbia and Montenegro to the war waged by the Milosevic regime. Mostly it took the form of resisting conscription into the armed forces. In Belgrade only 10 per cent responded to the call-up to what was then, in 1991, still the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA).

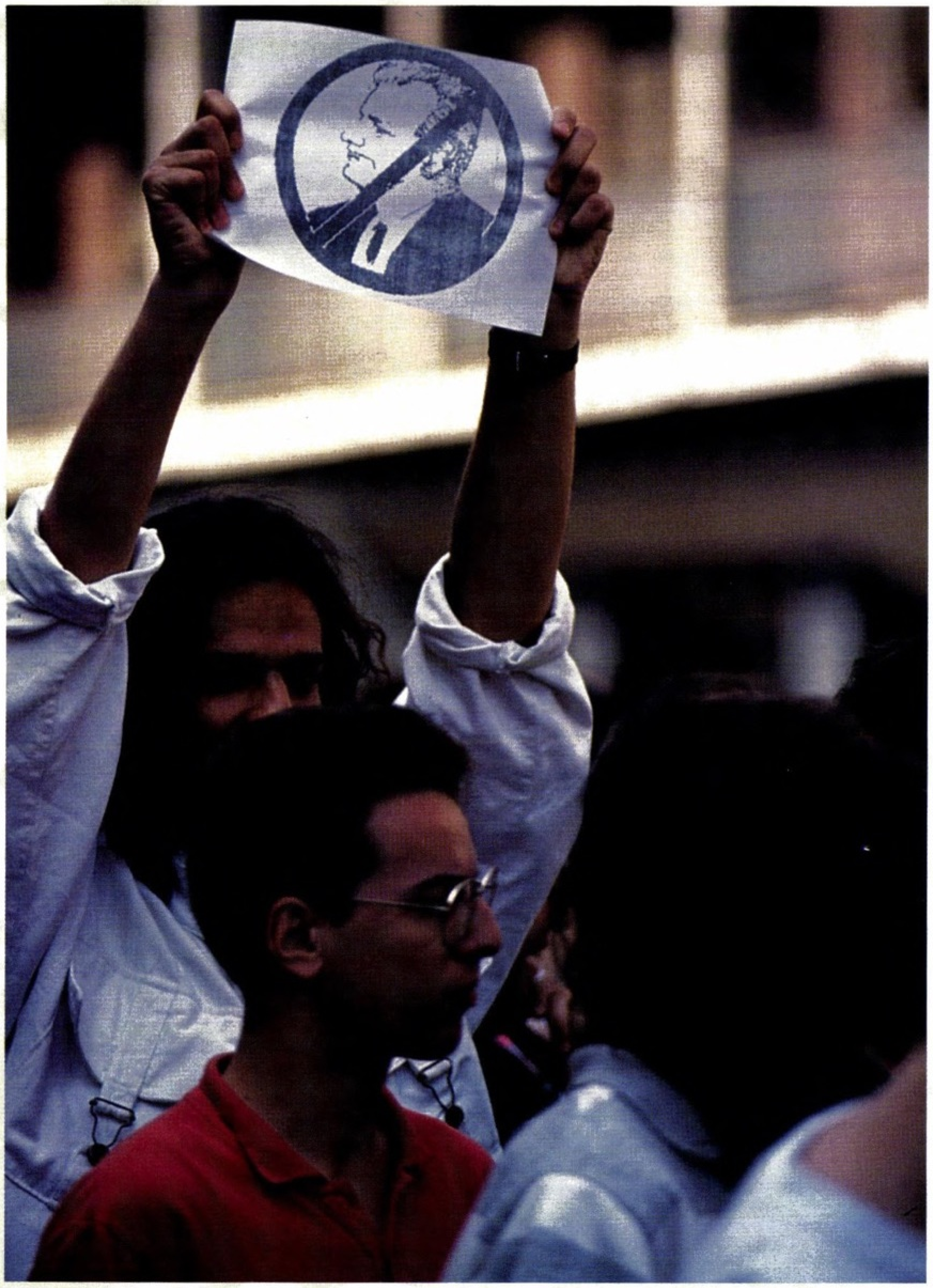
Thousands of young conscripts went into 'internal exile' hiding with friends and relatives. The latter would ignore knocks at the door so as to avoid receiving the call-up orders. Thousands of potential conscripts left the country and headed for Britain, France, Germany, Holland and Greece. Visas were not needed then – as they are today.

Even among those who did obey the draft, there was resistance. The story of young Miroslav Milenkovic from a small town in Serbia is a poignant example of the dilemma faced by many. When the new conscript reached barracks his unit had already split in two – between those who agreed to go to the front and those who were refusing. Milenkovic went from one group to another, not knowing which group of friends and relatives to side with. At one point he stopped and, standing between the two groups, took his rifle and shot himself.

The slogan of the resistance has been: 'this is not our war!' Even before the war began the opposition was warning that war was no solution but an irrational course that would bring worldwide condemnation; negotiations would still have to take place between the conflicting parties, whether there was a war or not.

The opposition of Serbs to Serbian nationalism has not been a focus of Western media. The latter has fallen prey to the need to portray conflicts in....good-versus-evil terms. Conflicts – and especially the one in former Yugoslavia – can rarely be understood in this way.

Back in 1990 the Democratic Party was still the main and strongest political voice against Milosevic. But it was to undergo a series of three debilitating splits. The war came as a shock to many. The first concerted movement against it came from the Centre for Anti-War Action in Belgrade in



'Don't count on us.' Less than a quarter of all Serbs voted for the Milosevic's nationalist regime.

July 1991. It organized legal and other support for deserters and was a network centre for activists. Several women's groups – like the SOS telephone group for battered women, the women's party ZEST, and the Belgrade Women's Lobby – continued their work, adapting their activities to the new situation. A new group, Women in Black, strongly opposed the war and nationalist tendencies. During the winter of 1991-92 there were candlelit vigils every evening outside the windows of Serbia's President Milosevic, in memory of those being killed in the war and in solidarity with those resisting it.

Anti-war actions flourished during 1992 – which was when the 'Don't Count On Us' rock concert took place. There was a six-week-long occupation of the University of Belgrade by students and professors, accompanied by street processions called 'The Path of Peace'.

In early 1992 the Belgrade Circle – an association of independent intellectuals – was formed. Like the Centre for Anti-War Action and the women's groups, it was concerned with creating the basis for a different Serbia. After the first 10 weeks of public meetings, the Belgrade Circle published a book *Another Serbia*, followed by *Intellectuals and War* in 1993. Members also went out into areas of tension – like Mostar – to network with similarly minded people there, and give support to villagers in areas where 'ethnic cleansing' was taking place.

Now, after three years of war, the struggle is continuing under extremely adverse conditions. Anti-nationalists are condemned as 'traitors', as 'anti-Serbs in Serbia', as 'forces of chaos and madness', as 'pawns of the West', and as 'the helping hand of the future colonizers'.

But Milosevic's propaganda machine has not yet managed to drown the voices of dissent inside Serbia. The independent media have stood firm in maintaining that the anti-nationalist and anti-war voices must be heard – whether it be in the printed press (such as *Borba*, *Vreme* and *Republika*) or the more-or-less independent TV and radio stations (such as *Studio B* and *TV Politika*). The journalists' independent professional organizations have also tried to countervail the immense influence of the three state-controlled, nationalist TV channels that reach out into the whole of Serbia. But because of Milosevic's overbearing presence on the international scene these voices of dissent are rarely heard outside Serbia and Montenegro.

The sanctions introduced against Serbia and Montenegro in May 1992 by the UN Security Council have dealt a particularly harsh blow to the opposition, severing it from a free flow of information, ideas and contacts with friends and colleagues around the world. It was a long while before the Security Council exempted independent media from these sanctions.

The war, the plunge into poverty as a result of Milosevic's policies and the effects of sanctions have created feelings of fear, uncertainty and apathy. More than half of the population is below the poverty line and the constant brain drain over three years has left this society without experts. Crime is widespread – in all aspects of social, political and economic life.

The illusion of a quick transition to democracy has evaporated. The opposition groups and individuals have learned the hard way that there is a desperate need for solidarity if the racist, fascist tendencies in Serbia and Montenegro are to be actively challenged.

Meanwhile, it is worth remembering the following statistics. In Serbia's last election 37 per cent of voters abstained. Milosevic's ruling party gained 37 per cent of the vote, but only 23 per cent of the whole electoral body. That is the true support for this abominable nationalist regime: less than a quarter. ■

PHOTOS: ART ZAMUR

Ivan Vejvoda is a journalist and founder member of the **Belgrade Circle.**

Simply... *news for you*

There are conventions about what news is and how it is reported. They are maintained within the industry by repeating clichés. But what lies behind these 'news values' is questionable.

...AND EVEN FROM THE HOTEL BAR WE CAN HEAR THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE..!! UM... NO-SORRY! IT WAS JUST THE CHAMPAGNE..
FAMINE I
EXPORT CASH CROPS
...THE SIMPLE BUT TRAGIC FACT: THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY PEOPLE, AND NOT ENOUGH BEING GROWN TO FEED THEM ALL.
USAF TERRORISTS KI
AGA
HOUSEW
IN KI
DISABLE
SEX PR
LOCAL COUPLE FLEE AFRICA EARTHQUAKE HOLIDAY HELL
STOP
T.V. & SAT

CLICHÉ: 'We bring you the news as it's happening – *live* on Network Kneejerk!'

COMMENT: Modern technology has made 'live' coverage almost essential for radio and television networks, with journalists flown in to report stories as they break. Accuracy is the first victim – there is no time to check facts. Context is the second – journalists don't understand themselves what is going on behind the action.

QUESTION: Do you need to have the news as it's breaking? What are you going to do with it..? How often are you left with a feeling you don't understand what is going on? How often has a story been left hanging because it's not seen as 'news' anymore?

CLICHÉ: 'WE ARE IMPARTIAL. WE DON'T TAKE SIDES. A GOOD STORY – THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS TO US'

Comment:

UNLIKELY, if not impossible. Sometimes there is no balance – as when a government is committing genocide. An illusion of balance is easy for journalists to create: by getting quotes from both sides, and using language that sounds objective to express subjective opinions.

Question:

Which side is the journalist reporting from? What assumptions, based on personal beliefs, loyalties and background, is he or she making? Are the people with guns described as 'soldiers' and 'freedom fighters', or as 'terrorists' and 'gunmen'?

CLICHÉ: 'WE SAY PEOPLE ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN THEMSELVES OR IN THOSE THEY CAN IDENTIFY WITH. WHY SHOULD THEY CARE ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING TO PEOPLE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD?'

Comment:

ONLY partly true – but most media carry on as if it were the whole truth. This led to saturation coverage of the Gulf War on the grounds that it could lead to fuel shortages in the West – and to the neglect of news elsewhere. Foreign coverage often focuses on Westerners involved in rescue operations rather than on the people who are directly affected.

Question:

Are you satisfied with the international news coverage you get? How often are the people directly involved asked to comment on it? Are you really incapable of understanding a person's joy or sadness if their language or the colour of their skin is different from your own?

CLICHÉ: 'We have to aim for the lowest common denominator – because people are basically stupid.'

COMMENT: The belief that people lack the capacity or inclination to absorb complex information is growing: convenient for news media that have struck upon a commercially successful formula ... anything that doesn't fit the slot isn't news. A slow or developing story, like the effects of IMF policies in Peru or a good harvest in Ethiopia cannot compete with the simple drama of an aircrash. But even dramatic hard news is threatened by the advertisers' demand for consumer 'fluff' or trivia to encourage a 'buying mood'.

QUESTION: Do you feel your intelligence is sometimes insulted by the mainstream media? How often are news snippets from faraway places presented without enough context to make sense of them? What's the ratio of hard news to trivia in the media you consume?

DO NOT QUESTION THE STATUS QUO
VES
KY
GAY
TEST
SEX PROBE
BIG JO
BURG
SPECI
DAY IN RUINS

CLICHÉ:

'WE REPORT PEOPLE THE WAY THEY ARE. WE REFLECT SOCIETY - WE DON'T CREATE IT'

Comment:

NEWS media are notorious for pigeonholing groups and individuals and reinforcing stereotypes of race, class and gender.

Question:

When is the last time you read: A positive story about the Third World? An exposé of middle-class and corporate violence? A male captain of industry described as 'luscious' or 'attractive' or perhaps as a 'blond bombshell'? Or a church service described as an 'exotic' or 'superstitious' ritual?

JOURNALIST BITES DOG!

EXCLUSIVE CLICHÉ

'WE CAN'T LET THE OPPOSITION BEAT US TO A NEWS STORY'

Comment:

THE NEWS is highly competitive. Typically, a reporter's worst fear is of missing a story that the opposition got. Rather than watchdogs, most journalists are running dogs, all going after the same stories. Offbeat stories stand little chance of being picked up - except by unusual or exceptional journalists.

Question:

How often does a story that has been ignored for years get picked up by several media at once - which then fall over themselves trying to find 'new angles'?

BIG JOE BURGERS SET TO GO GREEN!

CLICHÉ:

'WE MAINTAIN OUR EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE - REGARDLESS OF WHO OWNS US OR ADVERTISES WITH US'

Comment:

WHO are they kidding? Media ownership is becoming more and more concentrated, with independent outlets swallowed up by large corporations. Advertising determines the viability of most commercial media, and influences editorial policy, in ways that are not always obvious. Fear of libel actions is very real for media criticizing wealthy and litigious organizations like McDonalds.

Question:

How often do you see media running stories critical of their owners or advertisers? How many truly independent media do you know of? Do you support them? Do you subscribe to the NI?

AND THAT IS OFFICIAL!

CLICHÉ:

'WE LET THE FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES'

Comment:

EXCESSIVE respect for factual information from official or government sources leads to a conservative bias in reporting. 'Letting the facts speak for themselves' can easily provide a distorted or incomplete picture - depending on which facts are chosen. Also official sources may be wrong - or lie. Alternative analysis may be more likely than government sources to produce the truth.

Question:

What's the ratio of government and non-government sources quoted in the media you consume? How often has a story about something you know seemed wrong - even though it was backed by official data?

CARTOON: PJ POLYP

NATIONALISM

Most on-the-ground foreign news stories are filed from the capital cities of nation states. But what happens when news is being made by people to whom those states and their artificially-created boundaries mean little or nothing? This is the case for millions of indigenous or colonized people whose civilizations may stretch over a number of national boundaries and who may speak languages that have nothing to do with the national language. When these people are making news the nation-state-obsessed media often cannot see it happening or else do not know where to slot or how to angle these people's stories. The result: they don't get told at all.

The **return** of the **Indian**

It's a revolution – but that does not guarantee a place in the headlines. ***Phillip Wearne*** *reports from the Americas.*

- *In Ecuador tens of thousands of Indians block roads and refuse to supply city markets, shutting down the country for a week.*
- *In Bolivia an Aymara announces 'a new era' in making his vice-presidential acceptance speech in the country's three main indigenous languages, Aymara, Guaraní and Quichua.*
- *In Mexico a highly-organized Maya army takes over four towns and forces Latin America's longest-ruling party into protracted negotiations on indigenous rights.*
- *In Canada national political leaders agree a revised constitution recognizing native people's 'inherent right to self-government'.*
- *In Oslo a 33-year-old K'iche' Maya woman, a one-time domestic servant and illiterate coffee-picker, becomes the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize winner.*

SOMETHING is happening in the Americas but it's not something you'll read or hear about in the media. The above events are just the more notable symptoms of something so amorphous, so localized and so varied that it is not headline material. With no centre, no single leadership and no structure it reflects Indian society itself, defying all Western categorization as a movement.

Yet the 'Return of the Indian', as one scholar has dubbed it, is one of the most important trends in the Americas today. 'Ethnicity is a revolution that will have even more impact than Cuba's in 1959 – not least because it is continental and will remain by definition indigenous, less susceptible to outside influences,' says one Mexican journalist.

This may come as a bit of shock to those who assumed that Indians were on their way out – set to disappear or assimilate as modernity and 'progress' radiated out from the United States. Museums, yes: but political leaders, guerrilla fighters, popular organizers?

Indeed, as Noble Peace Prize Laureate Rigoberta Menchu Tum has noted, many people have already swallowed that myth along with the European version of the Conquest after the 'discovery' of 'Indians' by Columbus in 1492. 'As I go round the world many people I meet are surprised we indigenous peoples of the Americas still exist. They seem to think we died out years ago.'

In fact there are an estimated 40 million indigenous people in the Americas today – about six per cent of the total population. Guatemala and Bolivia have majority ethnic populations, Peru boasts more than eight million and Mexico at least ten million.

Historically, indigenous people are the pure-blooded descendants of the original inhabitants of the Americas. But few would accept a racial definition today. Many pure-blood Indians deny their origins to speed their assimilation and to blunt fierce racism.

Culturally, they can be divided into two groups. Highland Indians grow maize, beans and potatoes on insufficient snippets of land in the continent's most mountainous, least fertile regions; lowland Indians fish, hunt and practise a mobile form of slash-and-burn farming, mostly in the Amazon basin and what remains of the forests in Central America.

But the myth of generic 'Indianness' is, like so much else in the Americas, a European imposition. With 450 different ethno-linguistic groups in the Americas today, finding a common contemporary definition is almost impossible.

Millions of indigenous people now live in towns and cities: hundreds of thousands are completely bi- or even tri-lingual; tens of thousands have university degrees and professional jobs. Go into any indigenous-rights organization office in Lima, La Paz, São Paulo, Quito or Guatemala City today and you will hear or even see Quichua, Aymara, Tukano or Kaqchikel on the mobile phones, short-wave radios, faxes and videos.

JULIO ETCHART / REPORTAGE

Turning the tide: in the heart of Mexico City indigenous people claim their place in the political mainstream.

'Only Western anthropologists would want to freeze us in some noble savage state,' complains Valerio Grefa in Quito. 'Who says I can't be Quichua running COICA, the biggest multinational indigenous organization in the Americas? All they see are the externals – dress, language, socio-economic condition.'

Recovering 'identity' means different things to different people. For some it is simply rediscovering history, traditions and languages that seemed lost; for others it is adapting technology that once seemed alien; others prioritize control of economic development within communities.

But one thing tends to lead to another on the political consciousness scale. 'Teach people to read and write in their own language and they soon start asking where our books are,' notes Andrés Cuz of the Academy of Mayan Languages. 'That's a very political question.'

What Eduardo Galeano has termed 'collective amnesia' is now steadily being eroded by oral history workshops, indigenous-language radio stations and an unprecedented flourishing of interest in traditional religion and medicine. And not only among indigenous people.

Just hours before his inauguration last August, President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada – a white Bolivian who has lived most of his life in the United States – was invested with state power in an indigenous initiation ceremony. The President-elect and his wife knelt in front of an open fire for 20 minutes as several Andean priests made offerings to Pacha Mama – the Earth deity.

Outside on the streets of La Paz – as in Lima, Quito and Guatemala City – traders were doing a roaring trade selling herbs, bones, tree barks and other traditional medicine to all ethnic groups, whites and *mestizos* as well as Indians. 'In reclaiming their identity I think they forced all of us to ask ourselves who we are. There's some of them in virtually all of us,' says Ivan Arias, a *mestizo* Bolivian aid-agency worker.

Identities vary, but at the centre of most indigenous identities lies a common critical issue: land. The seizure of land was the basis of the conquest. Indian land spawned the cash crops – coffee, bananas, sugarcane – that have made Latin America a massive net food exporter while tens of millions of its native daughters and sons go hungry.

A plot of land is for most indigenous people a symbol of their right to live – the place where they grow the subsistence crops that ensure their survival. Many traditional Indians believe that if they do not eat the potatoes or maize that are their staples they will somehow lose their 'Indianness'. Even in the cities and towns to which so many Indians have now migrated, ownership of a plot of land on which to build your shanty ensures survival.

Thus land is also identity, and inheritance of land makes the vital link to ancestors whose spirits dictate so many customs and traditions. Land is the home of the most important indigenous god. Cultivating the land is, for the traditional Indian, the most profound communion with god she or he can aspire to.

And land rights have been the focus of most indigenous campaigning. A series of seminal protests – the 1992 uprising in Ecuador, the 1990 march for 'Land and Dignity' in Bolivia – secured presidential decrees guaranteeing huge tracts. In Brazil and Colombia such rights have been enshrined in new constitutions.

Demarcation of the territories is now a priority. 'Maps and legal registration are essential first steps,' says Marc Chapin,

THOMAS HOEPKER / MAGNUM

Indigenous conference in Guatemala: writing a new agenda in a language Western journalists cannot understand.

director of Native Lands, an organization that helps indigenous people map their territory. 'In the past indigenous peoples have lost their land simply because they couldn't prove that they owned it.'

Throughout the Amazon Basin indigenous guards now patrol the frontiers of huge tracts on foot, by canoe or in four-wheel-drive vehicles. Many carry short-wave radios linking them to the nearest village where faxes, computer networks and telephones can alert local and international support networks.

This illustrates how indigenous organizations are now working. Although armed struggle remains an option – guerrilla struggles in Mexico, Colombia, Guatemala and Peru recruited large numbers of Indians – the new organizations aim to win legal indigenous rights, enforce them and establish a measure of political and economic autonomy as a result.

'Once you have these rights, territories or budgets you have something to work with,' says Antonio Jacanamijoy, deputy President of the National Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Colombia in his downtown Bogotá office. 'Many of the rights we have on paper are excellent. It's the impunity with which they are often violated or unenforced that's now the problem.'

But none of this fully explains the recent upsurge in ethnic consciousness in the Americas. For many it first came to notice in October 1992, the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas. By marching on National Palaces or up the Cerro Rico silver mountain in Potosí, or by daubing statues of Columbus with red paint to symbolize blood, indigenous people throughout the continent managed to hijack what they had feared would be official 'celebrations'.

But the success of the '500 Years of Resistance Campaign' owed much to other trends. One of the most obvious was the renewed threat to the culture and survival of indigenous people. Roads, air travel and population growth have made the once marginal lands to which Indians have retreated more accessible; lumber, oil, gold and new, often more intensive forms of agriculture have made these frontier lands attractive.

'If you cannot escape from the traditional Western vision that views indigenous people in the Americas as defeated, subjugated relics of the past then you'll never appreciate what is happening here.'

Killings and kidnappings – the traditional means of maintaining Latin America's structural inequalities – have followed the state's armies and the entrepreneurs' *pistoleros* up the remotest reaches of the Amazon's tributaries, the steepest slopes of the Andes and deepest crevices of Central America's volcanoes.

Much of the impetus for this 'new colonization' has come from the wave of neo-liberal economic policies that have swept Latin America in the past decade. Mexico and Peru have removed constitutional rights to land – the product of revolutions in 1910-17 and 1968 respectively – all in the name of 'modernizing' agricultural production.

'The philosophy that drove the Conquest and the liberal revolutions of the late nineteenth century in the Americas is getting a new lease of life,' complains one foreign aid worker in Mexico. 'I see a really basic clash of cultures – community, self-sufficiency and ethnic plurality – against individualism, materialism and homogeneity.'

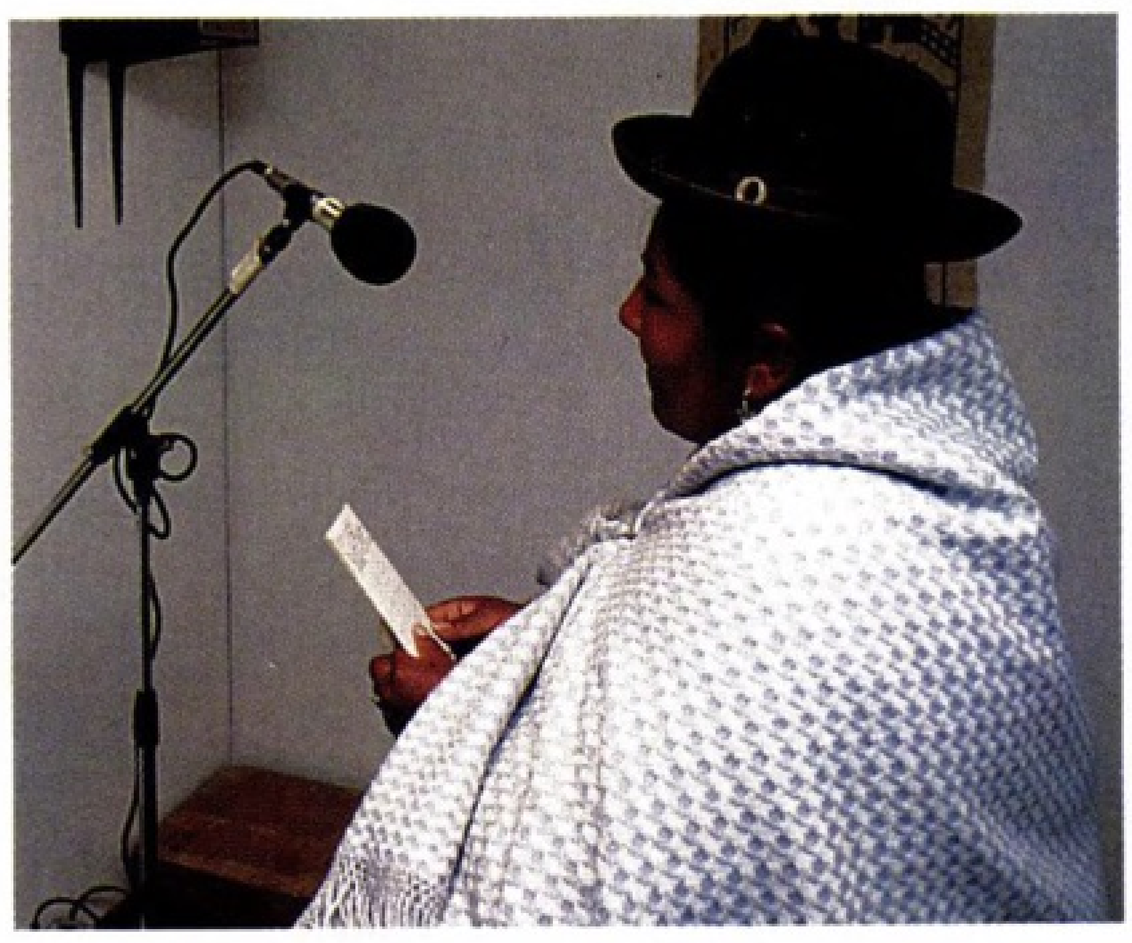
But the neo-liberalism brought in to deal with the consequences of the debt crisis has been one of the major stimuli for the self-help, grassroots organizations that have blossomed in recent years. Micro-organizations at village or *barrio* level ranging from pig-breeding co-ops to literacy classes are all designed to offset the devastating effects of massive cuts in social spending or loss of jobs and markets through privatization, devaluation and tariff reduction.

The new solidarity has fuelled cultural awareness through political awareness. But it has also attracted the attention of international aid agencies and environmental groups, who have found in indigenous values the alternative development model they need to combat the impact of neo-liberalism.

Broader indigenous vision has been a key part of the success. Something of a pan-Indian consciousness and solidarity has begun to emerge. Direct appeals to the World Bank on destructive development projects and to the United Nations on cultural rights have raised issues in international fora and put national governments' records under the microscope.

One other important factor has been the eclipse of the Left in Latin America. With the notable exception of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua – whose 1984 autonomy law recognized the ethnic distinctness of the Misquito, Sumo and Rama of the Atlantic

Straight talking in Aymara on indigenous radio in Bolivia.



SEAN SPRAGUE / PANOS

Coast – the Left has always resolved the class-ethnic debate in favour of class. Indians were the poorest, most exploited peoples because of their social, not cultural, position. Throughout the 1980s increasing numbers of Indians became indigenists, turning this analysis on its head by arguing that that they were at the bottom of the pile simply because they were Indians.

The end of the Cold War, the retreat and in some cases defeat of the Left either at the ballot box or in armed struggle has allowed the indigenist philosophy to flourish. Indeed some see ethnicity as the only really radical new force in the Americas, revitalizing a sterile political environment as traditional party politics go into meltdown.

'If you cannot escape from the traditional Western vision that views indigenous people in the Americas as defeated, subjugated relics of the past then you'll never appreciate what is happening here,' complains one anthropologist in Bolivia.

The weakness and dependency of nation states in Latin America contrasts starkly with the strength and self-sufficiency of indigenous culture. Five hundred years after Europeans set out to wipe them out, assimilate them, Christianize them and civilize them, they are still themselves, increasing in number, speaking their own languages, farming, hunting or gathering as their ancestors did.

That in itself tells us something about the scale and success of their resistance. Not just the rebellions of indigenous leaders like Tupaq Amaru, Tupaq Katari or Atanasio Tzul – but the ordinary everyday resistance of ordinary everyday peasants.

Indianizing useful Western imports and diversifying economically wherever possible, indigenous peoples in the Americas have used the weapons of the weak to ensure maximum cultural resistance. They rarely pose a direct challenge to the state. That, they know from bitter experience, is likely to be met with genocidal repression.

If you can break through the myths and stereotypes; if you can see indigenous culture as plural and very localized rather than uniform and homogenous; if you can realize that the state is weak and dysfunctional rather than omnipotent and hegemonic, the truth about nation states in the Americas emerges: they never were.

An even more dangerous truth starts to become obvious: it is indigenous people, their communities and culture that have kept these states weak. The evidence is there in the remotest villages and forests, the poorest slums, places where government officials and journalists – particularly Western journalists – do not venture, in languages they cannot understand, in types of organizations they cannot comprehend.

One of the main reasons indigenous organization has flourished is because of its amorphous, omnipresent nature. You can not co-opt, regulate or negotiate with 50,000 village organizations if they have no common genesis, no centralized leadership, no common platform. Anthropologists have written plentifully about *mestizaje* – the tendency of Indians to assimilate. But what about the reverse process? There is growing evidence that Indian perceptions of participatory democracy, autonomy, plurality might be working their way onto the state's agenda as a new generation of indigenous people flocks to universities, wins control of national organizations, gets into cabinets and presidential palaces.

'I die today, but I will rise again, and I will be millions...' said Tupaq Katari, the Aymara chief, moments before his execution in 1781. So it must seem now to many governments in the Americas, besieged on all sides by indigenous demands.

For Indians, who share a cyclical sense of time where everything that happens is balanced by an opposite, the surprising thing is that non-Indians are surprised by the upsurge in ethnic consciousness.

Action breeding reaction, conquest leading to reconquest, ups causing downs – all are part of their everyday indigenous world. Many in the Andes are convinced that the *pachakuti*, the 'balance upheaval' that legends and oral history have kept alive for centuries, has finally arrived. ■

Phillip Wearne is a freelance journalist whose book *The First Americans* will be published by Latin America Bureau later this year.

They do not know us yet

An unlikely alliance of missionaries and officials has its eye on the Baaka people.

THE tropical forest of central Africa has a reputation for being hostile to human life. But it is home to many different groups of pygmies – the last survivors of a very ancient people. Egyptian inscriptions dating back 4,000 years refer to them as 'dancers of God' who lived in 'the land of the spirits'.

Today there are only 250,000 left in Central Africa, belonging to six main groups – Baaka, Kola, Twa, Bongo, Aka and Mbuti. They live in the forest areas of nine African countries: Cameroon, French Congo, the Central African Republic, Gabon, Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Equatorial Guinea.

In the Central African Republic the Baaka people and their lifestyle are under threat from the Government and from Catholic missionaries, who are trying to move them from the depths of the forest into more organized village settlements where they can be overseen in the same way as other Central Africans.

As part of this move they are encouraged to build wells and latrines, and to adopt domestic agricultural techniques as opposed to their traditional hunting and gathering.

Both Government officials and missionaries justify their actions by arguing that the Baaka 'need to be brought into the modern age' in order to participate in the national culture and economy.

Better to have a school in the forest.

MARGARET WILSON

The Government wants to tax the Baaka – and it wants a freer hand in granting timber felling concessions to foreign companies in the forests where the Baaka currently live.

But the Baaka do not want to go. 'We are happy in the forest because it provides everything we need,' says Theresa, a spokesperson for the community of Sanguila in the forest of Haute-Sanga in the country's southern region.

'We want to carry on living here... I do not think that the forest will disappear; how can you think it would? People may damage the forest but this village will continue... When I die my children will live here...'

And they certainly do not want to move to the village resettlement the Government has in mind for them. 'The village is expensive and there is a lot of hunger,' according to Theresa. 'The villagers exploit us a lot. The missionaries would like our children to go to school there but they cannot go because they are teased by village children.

It would be better to have a school in the forest. The missionaries want to change us, but they will not change us. As for the Government, they do not give us anything – they do not know us yet.'

by **Margaret Wilson** and **Ingrid Kvale.**

GLOBAL DIGITAL HIGHWAY SUPER-BABBLE

OR

When more can mean less

IF YOU BELIEVE the techno-babble, we are heading down an 'information superhighway', whizzing through 'cyberspace' towards a 'global village'. But is it making us better informed about the world in which we live?

More outlets fewer hands

More:

Desktop publishing and video technology enables more people to set up their own small production companies. Third World videomaking is a growth area and small groups can more easily produce magazines and newsletters.

Less:

In 1945 more than 80 per cent of US media outlets were independent. Today just 23 corporations own more than 80 per cent of the US's media outlets. And withdrawal of advertising by multinational corporations can make or break a publication, regardless of circulation.

MEDIA EMPIRES

Time Warner formed by a merger of Time Inc. and Warner Communications, is the largest media corporation in the world. Its assets are greater than the combined gross domestic product of Bolivia, Jordan, Nicaragua, Albania, Liberia and Mali. Titles include *Time, Life, Fortune* and *Sports Illustrated* with an aggregate worldwide readership exceeding 120 million. It is the second largest cable company in the world and one of the largest book publishers.

News Corp Ltd, controlled by Rupert Murdoch, has more newspaper circulation around the world than any other publisher. Murdoch has two-thirds of all newspaper circulation in Australia, almost half in Aotearoa/New Zealand and a third in the UK. He has the largest satellite television system in Europe and has recently broken into the South and East Asian market. He controls Fox Broadcasting network and 20th Century Fox movie studios, is part-owner of CBS/Fox video and is the world's largest distributor of videocassettes. [1]

Reuters: Since it bought out the remaining shares of the largest television news agency, VisNews, the British-based news agency Reuters has become the main provider of both televised and print news from the developing world. It thus has the power to determine what is foreign news. Newspapers that used to rely on correspondents now depend on Reuters agency reports. Reuters also owns part of the British Independent Television News (ITN) network and Worldwide Television News (WTN). [2]

More media less news

More:

The size and outreach of the world's media is increasing all the time. There are an estimated 35,000 media outlets in the US alone. The round-the-clock news service CNN gets to 110 million viewing households worldwide. [1]

Less:

But coverage of international news – especially the rich world's coverage of the Third World – has dwindled:

- 30 years ago the major Western media had reporters based in most African countries. Today, of the American TV companies, only CNN has a bureau in any of the African countries between the Sahara and South Africa. [2]

- Between 1988 and 1990 only 5.6 per cent of international news on three US broadcast networks was about Africa. If you exclude South Africa, Ethiopia and Libya the figure was less than one per cent. [2]

More 'freedom' less autonomy

More:

With the collapse of the Soviet Union there is more press freedom in former Eastern bloc countries and the former communist countries of the South.

Less:

But political and corporate links mean less autonomy for journalists and editors. Business interests either openly or covertly set the agenda of what should be reported and how.

DUBIOUS LINKS

The chairperson of **Hachette,** which publishes *Paris Match*, sells 30 per cent of all books in France and is a major distributor of newspapers and magazines in Europe and the US, has also been chairperson of Mantra SA, France's largest manufacturer of armaments and military communications.

General Electric, the tenth largest US corporation and a major defence contractor, owns NBC, one of the top three US TV networks. Since 1941 General Electric has had five convictions for crimes including conspiracy (twice), fraud and tax evasion.

Silvio Berlusconi, Italy's largest media owner, used his friendship with former Italian Prime Minister Bettini Craxi – now disgraced for his mafia connections – to circumvent an Italian law forbidding commercial television networks. Today he has become Prime Minister.[1]

More technology less equality

More:

With electronic, fibre optic and other developments in communications technology, international networking is made easy and immediate. In theory the villager in Africa can have the same access to information, such as fluctuations in the international price of coffee, as the New York stock-market dealer.

Less:

There have been many technological revolutions which promised to bring education to Third World villagers. But even with well-established technologies – radio and television – vast inequalities of access still remain.

- In the rich industrialized world there are 1,023 radios and 492 TV sets per 1,000 of population, compared with 175 radios and 59 TVs per 1,000 in developing countries. The US has 814 TVs per 1,000 of the population compared with 0.8 in Burundi. [3]

- Despite the proliferation of media in Latin America 99 per cent of films shown on Brazilian TV come from North America and even Brazil's giant TV Globo only comes 301 in the UNESCO list of the 304 major information and communications groupings in the world. [4]

- Recent GATT free-trade agreements allow companies like Murdoch's Sky satellite network to swamp the Asian and Indian markets in spite of the prolific efforts of local producers.

- In October 1993 the biggest corporate merger in history took place with the $33 billion sale of the cable franchise company TCI – part-owner of CNN – to Bell Atlantic.[5]

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1 Ben Bagdakian, *The Media Monopoly*, Beacon Press, Boston 1992.
2 Christopher Patterson, *Concentration and Competition among the global television news agencies: implications for coverage of the developing world*, prepared for the MacBride Round Table, 1994.
3 *UNESCO Statistical Yearbook*, 1993.
4 Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, *The Global and the Local in International Communication*, Edward Arnold, London 1991.
5 Lawrence K Grossman, 'Reflections on Life Along the Electronic Superhighway', *Media Studies Journal*, Winter 1994.

ILLUSTRATION: ANNE CAKEBREAD

PREJUDICE

News media create markets for certain kinds of stories featuring certain kinds of people, determined by race, gender, class, nationality or other identities. If the same sorts of stories are always told about the same sorts of people, they themselves will start to 'mean' that story in the eyes of the reader or viewer. A symbolic trigger is created and prejudices are reinforced. It then becomes very difficult to tell any other story about those people or that place. The stereotype story then acts as a smokescreen that blocks out other important realities – be they good or bad.

No **Pablo**, **no** story

Colombia equals drugs equals violence. Don't you believe it, warns ***Sarah Stewart****.*

IN 1990 the death lists appeared on the main roads of the university town. 'My name was there, too,' says Jorge, sitting with Amelia, his young, heavily-pregnant wife and two-year-old son in the windswept Bogotá shantytown of Ciudad Bolívar.

'Then the threats began – telephone calls all the time. We left the city but they put a bounty on my head. I was accused of being a guerrilla. They arrested my eight-year-old nephew. Finally Amelia, my wife, was put in prison for "rebellion".'

Fear permeates the life of this young couple, as it does the lives of most political and human-rights activists. Colombia's political death toll is now reaching 11 a day, reflecting a human-rights crisis which ranks as the most grave in Latin America and one of the worst in the world. Each year more people die for political reasons than in the entire 17-year reign of General Pinochet in Chile.

Jorge fears he is still being pursued despite the lack of any evidence of wrongdoing. He and his wife have told no-one of their past – not even the other family with whom they live. And they never get involved in politics.

They are so alone here, I think. If they were to be tracked down and killed no-one would even realize why. Their bodies, like so many others, would just turn up in the ravines on the mountainous outskirts of Ciudad Bolívar. It they were never identified their bodies would be picked up, loaded onto lorries and trucked to the cemetery for the NNs – *ningun nombre,* or 'no name' – for the anonymous dead.

There, three times a week, the lorries drive up, bearing their grisly loads: the street children, the rubbish collectors who recycle paper and glass, the drug addicts and other unknowns. Holding his handkerchief to his face to block the stench, the graveyard worker says hundreds are buried in the vast, open pits of unmarked mass graves.

I think of Amelia and Jorge's story two days later when I am sitting in a lovely restaurant on the outskirts of Bogotá chatting with some journalists. 'There's no story here any more,' one of them says, fidgeting with his steak. The others nod in agreement over their lunches. 'No Pablo, no story.'

For years the mythical figure of drug baron Pablo Escobar has defined Colombia. His death last December, gunned down as he ran barefoot over the rooftops in a middle-class Medellín suburb, has changed the focus somewhat. But Colombia is still the original single-issue country: drugs and the drug barons.

There are good reasons for international concern about the drug trade. From inner-city London to Detroit or Cali, lives around the world are being destroyed by it. But within Colombia there's another war, far more pressing than the war on drugs. No matter where you turn, there are stories of pain and bloodshed: from the telephone call saying that the peasant leader you met the day before has just been gunned down in a restaurant by unknown assassins, to the Medellín architect who says calmly that he and his wife discuss with their young children what to do in the event that they are kidnapped.

But somehow these are not 'stories'.

What does it take to make human rights a story, I wonder? I go to visit the Colombian Government's office of the Presidential Adviser on Human Rights. But again I find myself talking about drugs.

'No other country in the world has had to fight the *narcos,* or drug traffickers,' says Mauricio Hernandez, adviser to the Presidential Human Rights Counsellor. 'I'm sure this would thwart the best police force in the world.'

No question, the Government's position is not enviable. The murder rate is 28,000 a year – more than in the US whose population is eight times the size. An estimated five million arms are circulating illegally.

Trigger-happy police get away with murder (left); while domestic life continues behind Bogotá's triple-locked doors (above).

TOP: GILLES PERESS / MAGNUM; CENTRE: JULIO ETCHART / REPORTAGE

But the insistence on drugs as the key is disingenuous at best and dishonest at worst. Despite Mr Hernandez's words, drugs have almost nothing to do with human-rights violations. In 1992, fewer than two per cent of all political deaths were committed by *narcos.* In the first nine months of 1993, none was ascribed to drugs.

Far more to the point is the fact that the major culprits in human-rights violations are Government forces. According to the respected Andean Commission of Jurists, 56 per cent of the political killings (excluding combat) where the killer could be identified in the first nine months of 1993 were carried out by Government forces. Paramilitary groups, which are closely linked to the armed forces, were responsible for 18 per cent; guerrilla groups – involved in a 40-year war in which neither side is prepared to negotiate – for 25 per cent.

'It is indisputable that the state is involved in human-rights violations – and this is frequent,' says a senior member of the Catholic Church's human-rights group. 'They are carried out by both state civilian and military personnel, and documented by the Attorney General's office and in the courts. Disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture – these are the main forms of repression,' he adds.

For their part, the guerrillas also routinely violate the Geneva Convention and humanitarian accords on war. They assassinate civilians and politicians, execute captured soldiers, and plant landmines which cause mostly civilians to suffer – the 11-year-old boy whose photo featured on the front page of the newspapers during my visit, for instance. To fund their operations some guerrilla groups resort to kidnapping, extortion and levying taxes on drug exports – a form of corruption which effectively erases their legitimacy.

The war against the guerrillas, like the drug war, justifies most of the repression: peasants are run off their land, trade unionists imprisoned for 'terrorism' when they go on strike. Recent economic policies have caused poverty levels to rise sharply. But protesters are now faced with new public-order laws – ostensibly aimed at the guerrillas and *narcos.*

And yet Colombia is not a dictatorship. It is inconceivable that in this formal democracy deaths and disappearances would be planned by central government. Nonetheless, government forces routinely carry out crimes with impunity. Soldiers, officers and the police are tried by their peers. The results are predictable: almost no convictions. These crimes may not be ordered by the centre of government but the Government is nonetheless guilty in the sense that it is not bringing people to trial. It is guilt by omission.

In a new report, Amnesty International condemns the 'largely ineffectual measures ostensibly designed to safeguard human rights, but which in reality have mainly served to protect the Government's national and international image'. Pierre Sané, Amnesty's Secretary General, is more blunt: the Government is marked, he says, by 'hypocrisy and lies'.

In March and April 1988 paramilitary groups backed by military officers murdered 20 banana workers in the northern region of

Uraba. Three officers involved were investigated – but instead of being disciplined they were promoted. One of them, Lieutenant Colonel Felipe Becerra, was sent to the US for training. Four years later he resurfaced. Late one night in October 1993, men under his command broke into the home of the Ladino family in Riofrio, tortured and murdered seven family members from 15 to 75 years old, then executed another five people. Apparently to back up the later accusation that all 13 were guerrillas, they forced several women into camouflage uniforms before executing them. Bercerra has not been charged or convicted of any crime.

Colombia's political death toll is now reaching 11 a day, reflecting a human-rights crisis which ranks as the most grave in Latin America and one of the worst in the world. Each year more people die for political reasons than in the entire 17-year reign of General Pinochet in Chile.

I make a trip to the hamlet of Mesetas. It seems like the end of the world. The town plaza is empty, with weeds growing in the main square and the trees covered in dust. The sense of abandonment is overwhelming.

In this region a war is being waged between the FARC guerrilla group and the army and paramilitary groups in league with both the army and emerald magnate Victor Carranza. The political targets: anyone thought to be on the other side.

The guerrillas engage in selective assassination, gunning down alleged informants or individuals said to belong to paramilitary groups. For the army and the paramilitary groups, the targets are alleged guerrilla supporters: communities – such as Mesetas – which have voted for the legal left-wing Patriotic Union (UP) party. Nationwide, 1,500 leaders and members of the UP have been killed since it was founded in 1985 – a record which constitutes genocide.

José Julian Velez, a simple farmer and mayor of Mesetas, sits at his desk, his hat by his side. Five of his family, including a six-year-old son, lie in the cemetery off the dirt road leading into town.

He doesn't really want to talk about the killings. 'For me it's too painful to remember the past,' he says. He's agreed to stay on as mayor because of what he calls the commitment to the people, but it is evident that he does not expect to survive either. Of the dozen or so towns in the area which once boasted UP governments, there are now only three.

One by one I meet people who are not likely to live out the year. One young man, involved in youth theatre, never leaves his house at night. 'You can be gunned down at any point,' he says.

Meanwhile the language of drugs and drug wars continues to provide the smokescreen for political murder. And the outside world carries on, oblivious. ■

Sarah Stewart is a journalist with Christian Aid specializing in Latin America.

No-one is safe from political violence in some areas. Anyone thought to be on the other side is a target.

GILLES PERESS / MAGNUM

An open door

Private lives can be shattered by media prejudice – or suffocated by fear of it. ***Dinyar Godrej*** *meets a couple who have tackled the threat head on.*

THE house lies on the fringes of the small town, in a narrow lane by the churchyard. It's easy to miss: there's a door in a high, windowless wall and the door is the same colour as the wall.

Behind the door and the wall the house opens its several folds: a sunlit court, a well-used kitchen, a cool, shaded dining room with its heavy, authoritative table. And a view through the glass-fronted colourful porch of the garden's sprawl, it's edge jewelled with the glint and shine of water. A perfect house for private lives. The ups and downs of family living – messy and wonderful – can carry on unobserved behind the featureless wall.

This family, however, has opened the door in the wall not only to friends and relatives, but also to journalists and photographers – and they are braver than most for doing so. For theirs is the sort of story people aren't quite used to yet and could provoke prejudice.

This house is home to Don Smart and Shen Elderton – and their foster son Danny Smith. The small town is Wallingford in Oxfordshire. And no, none of these details has been changed to protect anyone's identity.

Seventeen years ago Don and Shen began their efforts to foster or adopt a child, without any success. 'Social Services wouldn't accept our application as a couple. We couldn't get a social worker to walk across our threshold and look at our house and assess us,' recalls Shen. It mattered little that they were both professionals with a steady income and a loving commitment to each other. Nor did their love for children matter. As a gay couple they stood no chance. Until chance helped them.

Alison, Danny's mother, wanted to move to Oxford but was worried about uprooting him from his special school – Danny has

Down's Syndrome. Her sister, a social worker, knew of Don and Shen's predicament and arranged a meeting. Danny and Alison came to visit, bringing – for the first time – two social workers with them. They got on well with each other and Danny said he'd stay with them during the week and visit his mother over weekends. The social workers okayed it, but unofficially. In effect this became a private arrangement with no legal requirements or benefits or provision for Danny's disability.

At this juncture their lives could have shrunk dramatically if they'd chosen to be secretive about their sexuality. Instead right from the start Don and Shen decided they would live their lives as they had always done – openly, concealing neither their gayness nor their role as foster parents.

Don liaised extensively with Danny's school and they received the family warmly. Important parenting decisions had to be made. 'I remember when we decided to let Danny walk home alone from school,' says Don. 'People said: "Don't do that. He'll get run over by a car." But it was important for Danny to be responsible for himself. And yes, one day he was in an accident. But no-one was hurt.'

Sometimes people's curiosity would get the better of them and they'd want to know what effect Don and Shen's parenting would have on Danny's sexuality – as though parents can predict the course of a child's sexuality. Their reply was that Danny was treated as an equal in the household and his responsibility extended to his sexuality.

'I feel quite strongly about the idea that society has about parents and their rights,' says Don. 'Parents feel that because the child is theirs it is divine parentage. They're much more arrogant than I could ever have been about parenting. I learnt my parenting through Parent Effectiveness Training. Now people say: "Oh what a splendid parent you've been!" as though they expected otherwise. It wasn't easy. There were tears, disappointments, upsets: in fact normal family life.'

As they gained confidence that they had succeeded as a family they started thinking of adding more children to it. With Danny's permission they attempted to foster another child, but found themselves facing a psychiatrist who had his own preconceptions about gay lifestyles.

'He wanted to know who was mummy and who was daddy. Who was the active one and who was the passive one,' says Shen. They suffered this patiently, but in the end the psychiatrist's 'professional' assessment went against them. The child was made a ward of court.

Don and Shen remained in touch with other lesbian and gay couples who were attempting to foster children. They knew of women who had managed to foster but had kept their sexuality secret. Don and Shen decided to go public – so that others would know of the struggle, to forestall scandalmongers and to shatter some myths about gays and children. Their story broke in a positive manner and there was no media orgy of hatred. Shen, a therapist and trainer, lost one client.

They told their story because it needed to be heard. There are numerous other stories about gay people, positive stories, that don't get heard. People who are proud and confident in their gay identity are still vulnerable to the homophobia of the press, the law and society in general. In 'tolerant' countries where homosexuality isn't illegal, being outed publicly can still mean losing one's job, the goodwill of neighbours and harassment by strangers. Elsewhere the punishments can be more drastic – imprisonment and even death. As long as sexual nonconformity is demonized, the stories won't even begin to be told.

GAELLE ROUX

Private arrangement, open lives: Clockwise from top left: Don Smart (holding Eve Smith), Alison Smith, Shen Elderton, Danny Smith and Freyda Smith (centre).

For Don and Shen the situation has moved on. Danny is now an adult. His foster parents are still there for him but he has also found independence as an actor with the Kaleidoscope Theatre in Walsall. Recently at a post-performance party at Stratford-upon-Avon Danny was besieged by admiring friends. Don stood at the edge of the group wondering whether he should join it, when Danny caught his eye and gave him the thumbs-up sign. It meant a lot.

Other things do not change. Social Services in Oxfordshire still don't consider lesbian and gay couples for fostering. From time to time the tabloids 'discover' a child adopted or fostered by gay parents and turn on their special brand of hatred posing as morality, ruining lives in the process.

Don and Shen will have to keep that door of theirs open. ■

Dinyar Godrej is a freelance writer and poet.

BUSINESS INTERESTS

Protecting the business interests of the powerful is the most pervasive form of press censorship in today's post-Cold War world. Governments, their friends and large corporations can have a powerful influence in determining which stories get told. Large corporations can withdraw advertising or, increasingly, buy up media outlets. For media who dare to criticize corporate giants there is always the fear of libel action. Big business has the resources to invest in a posse of wily libel lawyers – the smaller media, action groups and individual whistle-blowers do not. Journalists or civil servants who expose dubious links between government and business may find themselves facing criminal proceedings for disclosing information deemed to be harmful to 'national security' – especially when the government in question gets mixed up in arms deals.

The Mafia and Mrs Ciller

The Turkish Mafia is in cahoots with the Government, claims ***Ivy Anderson.*** *And peasants are first in the firing line.*

CEVAT YILDIRIM drove his old red Massey Ferguson tractor, his wife and daughter sitting on the mudguards, to their field beside the stream known as Uzun Dere. A large red Dodge lorry was already there. Men were standing by with shotguns, while others set concrete posts into the ground and strung barbed wire between them.

'The land Mafia,' said his wife. 'Don't go near them. They'll kill you.'

Cevat was around 40 years old, with the broad chest and muscular arms of a Turkish villager.

'This is our land,' he told the men. 'We have been here since Ottoman times. We have the title at home.' He stepped forward and tried to pull one of the posts from the ground.

One of the men hit him across the skull with a steel bar.

'The land is ours now,' the gangsters laughed. 'Here, come and take your man. And don't come back again.' Cevat's family took him back to the village. They laid his body on the trestle in the courtyard of the mosque. His mother and brother came and buried him in the cemetery beneath the oak trees, overlooking the lake and the land the Mafia had seized – land to quarry aggregate for the new E80 motorway and an airport.

Peasant life under threat. The Mafia have designs on the entire Adriatic coastline.

I visited the family in their home. They gave me cakes and *ayran* (yogurt drink). Cevat's brother showed me the title to their land. They were the descendants of Ismael, the son of Haci Arif of Kurna village. The pieces of land, with their boundaries and area, their use and value, were all listed in Ottoman script.

'Ours was a mixed village. We are Turks and Muslims, ordinary people, but there were Greeks and Armenians, Kurds and Laz all living happily side by side. No-one bothered about another person's religion. Even after 1922, when the minority groups were driven out, we respected the old titles. We said we were keeping the land for our neighbours when they returned.'

In 1956 there was a move to translate the old titles into modern Turkish – but it was never properly completed. Many holdings got missed out, for simple reasons, such as peasants being away from their land the day the surveyor called. The end result was that many who had legal Ottoman titles never got the modern pink certificates and their land was put in the name of the Treasury.

This did not matter too much – until 1987 when the Government passed a new law making it possible for groups or individuals to occupy land and pay for a government surveyor to issue a new title. The Mafia – looking out for new opportunities – was quick to move into action.

According to villagers and journalists they are now everywhere – and are well-connected. The names of prominent business people and politicians crop up time and again in connection with land grabs.

FAR LEFT: ARA GULER / MAGNUM; LEFT: ANNE CAKEBREAD

Long stretches of coastline from Istanbul in the north to Izmir in the south are reckoned to have been occupied. Agricultural land is being 'sold' to business interests, including multinational companies such as Ford, Bayer and Mazda or, increasingly, the tourism industry.

Cevat's family show me more land titles and tell me more stories about peasants in the region who are losing their holdings in this way. Their agricultural land is seized to provide sites for businesses ranging from driving schools to battery factories. The man who seized the land in Tepeoren village where the Mutlu battery factory is built now owns a fleet of new lorries. Meanwhile the rightful owners of the land live in poverty.

'There are millions of pounds at stake. Ministers themselves have occupied land. Here we deal with small things. How can I stop the Mafia?'

'Let's do something about it,' I say. We go to Kartal, to the office of the government surveyor.

'I have orders from Ankara,' he says, 'from the Prime Minister, to put the land into the names of the occupiers. I am putting the owners' letters into the cupboard. I retire in two years. My successor will answer them.'

He opens a grey metal cupboard. Inside are the villagers' letters and copies of their titles. In the corner of the room is a highly-polished wooden staff, and a short silk robe with gold embroidery indicating membership of some society. I mention them to his secretary as I am leaving. She smiles knowingly.

In the same building is a store room holding the old Ottoman records. We find a translator, an old man educated before Ataturk introduced the modern script. He translates the old records and we take copies to the Governor.

'I have been told that I am not to prevent people occupying the land if the owner hasn't got a modern pink title. There are millions of pounds at stake. Ministers themselves have occupied land. Here we deal with small things. How can I stop the Mafia?'

We go to the Kartal office of Turkey's largest daily newspaper, *Sabah* or 'Morning'. The office has four desks. Two are empty. The surviving reporter and photographer tell us the story:

'The telephone rang here at seven o'clock in the evening. Our two colleagues were doing a story on the Mafia. The caller told them there was a fire at Gocbeyli village on the border with Ballica. They went in the office car. Next day the car was found burned out. They have never been seen since. The newspaper offered a reward. But there was no information. People are afraid of the Mafia.'

Aydinlik – or 'Brightness'– is another smaller and newer newspaper which obtained a list of the Prime Minister's own land holdings at Kurtkoy and Kilyos. The offices of the newspaper were attacked and set on fire. The crowd were told that the editor had translated *The Satanic Verses* into Turkish; 36 people died in the fire.

According to the *Sabah* reporter (who for obvious reasons does not want to be named): 'The Government is faced with huge economic problems. Annual inflation is at 75 per cent and there was a 15 per cent currency devaluation earlier this year. The Government needs money. It wants to sell the land of anyone who has only an Ottoman title. This means not only the Greeks and Armenians and other minorities who fled in 1922, but also those ordinary Turks who simply were not given pink title certificates in 1956.'

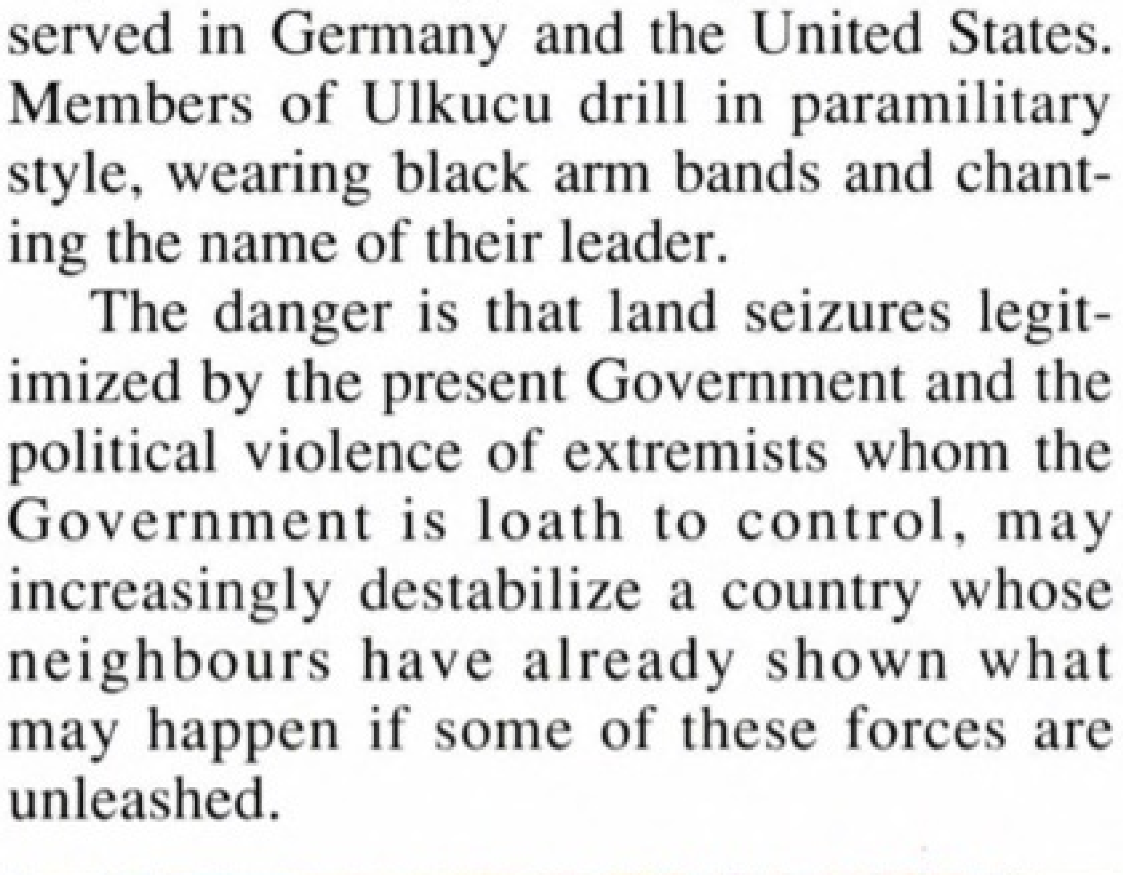
Turkey is a signatory of the European Human Rights Convention. 'But people disappear,' the reporter continues. 'We try to do our best. But we put our lives at risk when we do so.

'Nowhere else in the world could the government sell people's land to the Mafia or politicians or company proprietors and get away with it. But that is what the Turkish Government is doing: it's taking people's land and putting it into the names of members of the Mafia. When ordinary people go to the Title Office and ask to see the old records they are driven away. Some enterprising Mafia figures and politicians are then offering the land to the World Bank as security for loans for tourist development or for industrial expansion.'

All roads seem to lead back to Prime Minister Ciller, the former economics professor from the Bosphorus University. She likens herself to Margaret Thatcher. Some say a closer comparison might be with Imelda Marcos. It is Tansu Ciller who is behind the new land-titles legislation.

Unable to control the economy, indifferent to human rights and compliant with the Mafia, the Government is also afraid of the violence of an organization called Ulkucu whose slogan is: 'Turkey for the Turks'. Ulkucu is an offshoot of the National Socialist Party. Its activities include political intimidation and attacks on minorities and foreigners. Their emblem is a red crescent with a wolf baying at the sky. It was founded by Alpaslan Turkey, an army officer who served in Germany and the United States. Members of Ulkucu drill in paramilitary style, wearing black arm bands and chanting the name of their leader.

The danger is that land seizures legitimized by the present Government and the political violence of extremists whom the Government is loath to control, may increasingly destabilize a country whose neighbours have already shown what may happen if some of these forces are unleashed.



ABC AJANSI / CAMERA PRESS

Prime Minister Ciller in electioneering mode.

By destroying a stable society whose land titles go back to Ottoman times, a weak government is – for the sake of personal gain and office – likely to push the country into the abyss. ■

Ivy Anderson is an expert on Turkey and campaigns for human rights there.

You can be sure of Shell

The oil giant Shell likes to promote itself as 'green'. But closer examination reveals another picture. ***Andrea Goodall*** *takes a look at one of the world's biggest companies.*

GREEN pastures and beautiful rolling hills scroll over the TV screen. A reassuring voice tells us that this beautiful countryside – filled with badgers and rabbits and foxes and buttercups – is a Welsh Valley *after* Shell has laid a pipeline through it.

The voice goes on to tell us how the company consulted with local people before laying the line. The commentary ends with the rhetorical question: 'Can we develop the industry we need without destroying our countryside? You can be sure of Shell.'

Let's slip down the globe a bit – 3,000 miles or so to the Niger Delta, where Shell has been operating since 1957. Over six million people live here: an average of 1,250 people per kilometre compared to the Nigerian average of 300.

This area is home to the Ogoni people. Shell maintains that 'the company has never acquired land without paying due compensation or obtaining the approval of landlords'.[1]

But the Ogoni people see it differently. In 1990 80 villagers were killed by the Mobile Police Force during a protest against Shell. A judicial inquiry into the disaster concluded that, because oil companies were negotiating settlements with mostly illiterate villagers, the settlements were always unfair.

The judicial inquiry then presented a catalogue of reasons why the Ogoni had cause for complaint. 'Their streams get polluted with waste products from oil operations rendering the river void of fishes... their farm crops planted on the remaining areas of farmland get damaged by oil pollution; their trees are hewed down...'

It went on: 'The compensations paid for these deprivations are just a pittance, a meagre pittance...'[2]

The environmental degradation caused by Shell's operations is widespread across Ogoni land. High-pressure pipelines pass above ground through villages and over agricultural land. Some pipelines are laid within metres of houses. Others criss-cross land that was once used for agricultural purposes, rendering it economically useless. The Ogoni claim that they have never seen, let alone been consulted over, an environmental impact assessment.

It's a far cry from Shell's vaunted gentle treatment of the British countryside. When constructing its pipeline from Stanlow in Cheshire to Mossmoran in Scotland, for example, the company commissioned 17 different environmental surveys before cutting a single turf.

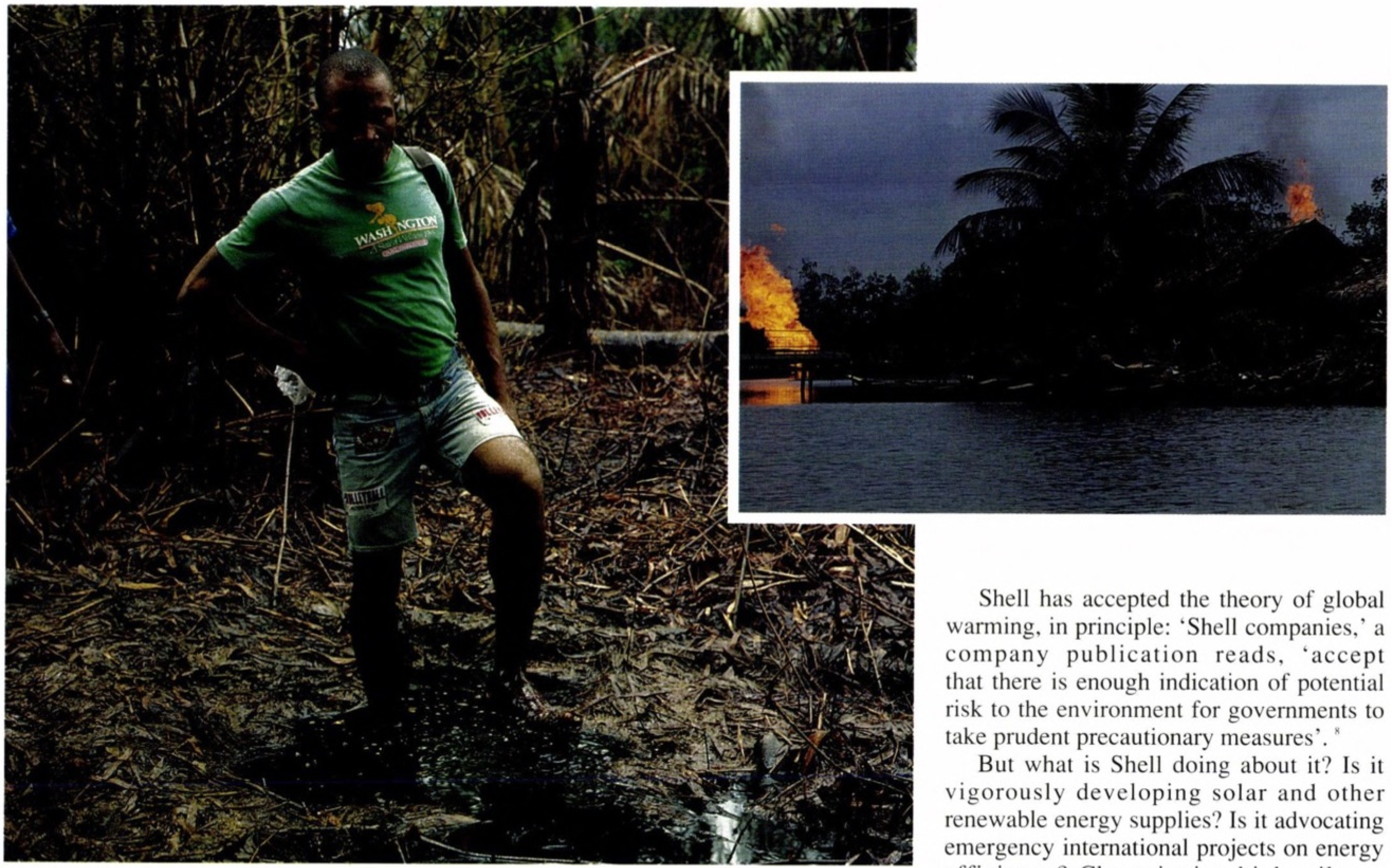
But Shell has an answer to criticism over its operations in the Niger Delta region. It maintains that '60 per cent of oil spills... are caused by sabotage, and that therefore the company is not directly responsible'.[3]

The Nigerian Ministry of Petroleum Resources does not agree. Of the 2,676 oil spills that took place between 1976 and 1990, sabotage was only responsible for 18 per cent, it states. The largest single cause – 38 per cent – was equipment malfunction.

Ogoni spokesperson Ken Saro-wiwa has accused Shell of waging an ecological war against the Ogoni.[4]

He has also tried to highlight their plight through the international media. Shell is getting worried. Internal draft documents of a meeting on community relations and the environment held in the Hague and London in February 1993 revealed that the company was concerned that its Nigerian operation had the potential to turn into an international PR nightmare.

The document went on to propose that



FAR LEFT AND LEFT: SARA LEIGH LEWIS / PANOS

Sticky business in the Niger Delta: Ogoni activist examines the evidence of Shell's 'care' for the environment.

Shell Petroleum Development Corporation and Shell international public affairs departments should 'keep each other more closely informed to ensure that movements of key players... are more effectively monitored to avoid unpleasant surprises and adversely affect the reputation of the Group as a whole'.[5]

In Nigeria Shell's threats to the environment – serious though they are – can in a certain sense be categorized as 'regional'. But the threats Shell poses are global as well. Nowhere are the ultimate goals of the company more questionable than when it comes to greenhouse-gas emissions and climate change.

Ogoni spokesperson Ken Saro-wiwa has accused Shell of waging an ecological war against the Ogoni.

In 1990 a body of renowned scientists, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), declared themselves certain 'that global warming would occur if society continued to emit greenhouse gases in anything like the volumes it does today'.

These scientists could not be certain how fast this would happen but considered it likely that the rate would seriously endanger the ecosystems on which humans ultimately depend. The possible consequences of global climate change include changes in rainfall patterns, rising sea levels, disruption of food supplies, mass extinction of species and flooding of coastal plains and islands which could force hundreds of millions of people from their homes.

Burning oil is the number-one source of the number-one greenhouse gas: carbon dioxide. Oil companies like Shell cannot claim that they have no knowledge of the damage their main product causes. In 1990, when the IPCC's scientists reached their verdict, the age of innocence was over.

Shell is the world's leading oil and gas producer with more reserves than any other company.[6]

In 1992 its annual sales exceeded the GNP of all but 23 countries of the world.[7] With 2,000 operating companies spanning the globe, it is one of the top three companies in almost every consuming region. It has more marketing operations in more countries than any other oil company and is responsible for five per cent of the world's oil and gas production. Its liability for climate change is undeniable.

Shell has accepted the theory of global warming, in principle: 'Shell companies,' a company publication reads, 'accept that there is enough indication of potential risk to the environment for governments to take prudent precautionary measures'.[8]

But what is Shell doing about it? Is it vigorously developing solar and other renewable energy supplies? Is it advocating emergency international projects on energy efficiency? Championing high-mileage cars, even?

It is doing none of these things. What it *is* doing is supporting a number of lobby groups with useful-sounding names: the Global Climate Coalition and the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD), for example.

The Global Climate Coalition is an organization funded by oil, coal and auto companies with the goal of derailing any negotiations which may limit the use of oil and other fossil fuels. BCSD was founded in 1991 by billionaire Swiss industrialist, Stephen Schmidheiny, and is an alliance of 43 of the world's richest transnational corporations. Its oil industry representative argued on TV at the Earth Summit that all the oil on the planet could be burned with impunity.[9]

In one regard at least, then, you can certainly be sure of Shell. ■

Andrea Goodall is an oil researcher with Greenpeace.

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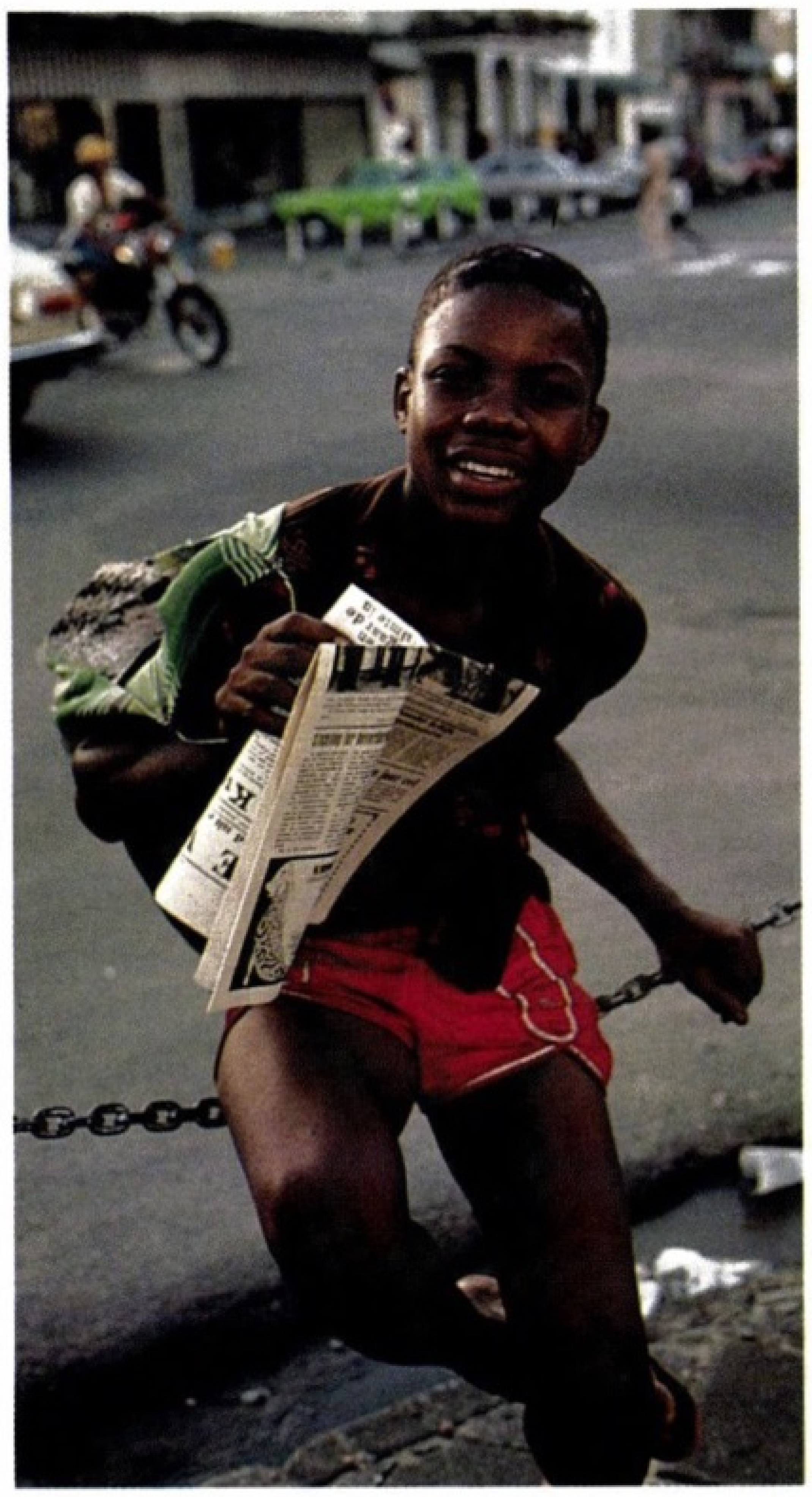
1 Shell International, *Heat of the Moment*, London 1992. **2** Hon Justice Inko-Tariah O, Chief Ahaiakow JA, Alamina BA, V Chief Godwin Amadi, *Commission of Inquiry into Causes and Circumstances of Disturbances .. in Rivers State*, Nigeria, 1990. **3** Tookey, RW, 9 Dec 1992, letter to Shelley Braithwaite, London Rainforest Group, SIPC. **4** UNPO, *Development in Ogoni*, 1993, Nigeria, Office of the General Secretary, The Hague. **5** SPDC, Draft minutes of Meeting at Central Offices on Community Relations and the Environment 15 and 16 Feb, London and 18 Feb, the Hague, 1993. **6** Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change*, Cambridge University Press, 1990. **7** *World Bank Atlas*; Fortune 1992, *the Fortune Global 500*. **8** SIPC, Shell and the Environment, 1992. **9** Gabrielle Cagliari, CEO of ENI, in Superchannel TV interview in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992.



MICHAEL NICHOLS / MAGNUM

Worth reading on the media...

Disasters, relief and the media by Jonathan Benthall (IB Tauris, London and New York, 1993) is a highly readable anthropologist's view of media and aid agency responses to Third World disasters. Politically and ethically aware, with psychological depth. **Who Stole the News?** by Mort Rosenblum (John Wiley, New York, Chichester, Brisbane, Toronto, 1993). A racy rattle of a read from a senior Associated Press correspondent. Analytically sketchy, but hot on revealing anecdote, with a strong sniff – or whiff? – of the real. **The Media Monopoly** by Ben H Bagdikian (Beacon Press, Boston, 1992) Updated classic critique of corporate media control. Fact and thought-packed. **Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media** by Edward S Harman and Noam Chomsky (Pantheon Books, New York, 1988). A ground-breaking, eye-opening myth-shatterer that could forever change the way you think about democracy, freedom and the media.

Special thanks for help in researching this issue of **NI** go to: Naga Vigil, Survival International, Greenpeace, Latin America Bureau, Minority Rights Group, Christian Aid, Oxfam Press Office, Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi at Leicester University, Colin Sparks and Paddy Scannnell at Westminster University, Nancy Woods at Sussex University, Philip Schlesinger at Sterling University, and Michael Traber and Pradip Thomas at the WACC.

Action

YES, you **CAN** influence what news you get and how it is presented. Writing letters to newspapers, magazines and broadcasting networks is still a powerful means of expressing dissatisfaction – or satisfaction: it's as important to encourage the good as to criticize the bad!

The following groups are involved in research and/or campaigning for a better media:

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Friends of Radio (Inc) 1 Waitaki Street, Christchurch 7. Tel: (3) 388 3357. Fax: 03 364 2727. Aims to preserve and protect non-commercial broadcasting.

Children's Television Foundation (Inc) c/o NZ Broadcasting School, PO Box 22095 Christchurch. Tel (3) 332 4720. Fax: (3) 348 4311. Forum for discussion of children's media issues.

Media Aware PO Box 1354 Auckland. Tel: (9) 358 1605. Fax: (9) 307 3765. Aims for a better quality media and to empower people in their interaction with the media.

Connected Media Trust PO Box 78-121 Grey Lynn, Auckland. Tel: (9) 376 6060. Fax: (9) 376 6077. Non-profit distribution service for films on environment and development issues.

AUSTRALIA

Australian Centre for Independent Journalism University of Technology, 15-73 Broadway, Sydney, NSW, 2007. Tel: (2) 330 1990.

Media Studies Department Queensland University of Technology, PO Box 284, Zillmere, QLD, 4034. Tel: (7) 864 2111.

Media Information Australia published through the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, PO Box 126, North Ryde, NSW 2113.

CANADA

Media Foundation 1243 W 7th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V6H 1B7. Tel: (604) 736 9401. Produces magazine *Adbusters*, which satirizes ads as well as analyzing advertizer influence on media content.

Project Censored 1004 2720 College, Regina, Sask, S4T 1T9. Produces an annual list of the top 10 stories ignored or suppressed by the mainstream Canadian media.

UK

Article 19 The International Centre Against Censorship, 90 Borough Road High St, London SE1 1LL. Tel: (71) 403 4822. Fax: (71) 403 1943. International human-rights organization campaigning for the right to freedom of expression and information. Currently campaigning on censorship in Turkey.

Index on Censorship 33 Islington High Street, London N1 9LH. Tel: (71) 278 2313. Fax: (71) 278 1878. Journal recently relaunched.

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom 8 Cynthia St. London N1 9JF. Tel: (71) 923 3671. Campaigns for a democratic, diverse and accountable media, accessible to all.

Centre for Mass Communication Research University of Leicester, 104 Regent Road, Leicester, LE1 7LT. Tel: (533) 523863. Fax: (533) 523874. Carries out teaching and research into the sociology of the mass media.

Centre for Communications and Information Studies University of Westminster, 235 High Holborn, London WC1 7DN. Tel: (71) 911 5000. Fax: (71) 911 5156. Carries out teaching, research and involved in production of the journal *Media and Society*.

World Association for Christian Communication 357 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5QY, Tel: (71) 582 9139. Fax: (71) 735 0340. Works towards reform of world media, especially to encourage reversal of North-South news flows.

US

Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) 130 W 25th Street, New York, NY 10001. Tel: (212) 633 6700. Produces the newsletter *Extra*.

Project Censored Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA 94928. Tel: (707) 664 2500. Produces annual list of top 10 stories ignored or suppressed by the mainstream US media.

Institute of Media Analysis 145 W 4th Street , New York, NY 10012. Tel: (212) 254 1061. Produces *Lies of our Times*, which focuses particularly on the *New York Times.*

Media and Values 1962 S Shenandoah, Los Angles, CA 90034. Tel: (213) 559 2944. Encourages media-critical thinking in schools.

If you want more information or wish to get involved in campaigning on some of the issues raised in this magazine contact the following groups:

AOTEAROA /NEW ZEALAND

Amnesty International NZ Section, PO Box 793, Wellington. Tel: (4) 499 3349. Campaigns for human rights worldwide (see pages 4, 20 and 24).

AFIA PO Box 1905, Christchurch. Tel: (3) 3662 803. Indigenous peoples action group (see page 14).

Greenpeace Private Bag 92507, Wellesley Street, Auckland. Tel: (9) 377 6128. Tackles multinational corporations and governments in its high-profile campaigns for the environment (see page 26).

OUT Organization Private Bag, Auckland. Gay and lesbian information (see page 22).

AUSTRALIA

Amnesty International PO Box 1611, Broadway NSW 2007. Tel (2) 281 4188. Campaigns for human rights worldwide (see pages 4, 20, and 24).

Greenpeace PO Box 139, Surry Hills, NSW 2010. Tel: (2) 211 4066. Tackles multinational corporations and governments in its high-profile campaigns for the environment (see page 26).

Aboriginal Support Group 156 George St, Fitzroy VIC 3065 (see page 14).

Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby 78 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, Sydney, NSW 2010. Tel: (2) 360 6650 (see page 22).

CANADA

Amnesty International 401-214 Montreal Road, Vanier, Ontario, K1L 1A4. Tel: (613) 744 7667. Campaigns for human rights worldwide (see pages 4, 20 and 24).

Greenpeace Canada 185 Spadina Avenue, 6th floor, Toronto Ontario. M5T 2C6. Tel: (416) 345 8408. Tackles multinational corporations and governments in its high-profile campaigns for the environment (see page 26).

World Council of Indigenous Peoples 100 Argyle, 2nd floor, Ottawa ON K 2P 1B6. Tel: (613) 230 9030 (see page 14).

UK

Survival International 310 Edgware Road, London W2 1DY, UK. Tel: (71) 723 5535. Fax: (71) 723 4059. Campaigns for the rights of indigenous people. Current action against the Bangladeshi Government for the Jumma people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (see pages 7 and 14).

Greenpeace Greenpeace House, Canonbury Villas, London N1 2PN. Tel: (71) 354 5100. Fax: (71) 359 4372. Tackles multinational corporations and governments in its high-profile campaigns for the environment (see page 26).

Earth Action 9 White Lion Street, London N1 9PD. Tel: (71) 865 9009. Fax: (71) 278 0345. Is running an Ogoni Action Alert for people of the Niger Delta (see page 26)

Amnesty International 99-119 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1R 4RE. Tel: (71) 814 6200. Fax: (71) 833 1510. Campaigns on most aspects of human rights. Recent actions on human rights in Colombia (see page 20) and Turkey (see page 24).

Naga-Vigil Human Rights Group 32 Boundary Road, Chatham, Kent , ME4 6TS. Tel: (634) 404359. Fax: (634) 815005. Campaigns for Naga liberation and raises funds for development projects within Nagaland (see page 4).

African Rights 11 Marshalsea Road, London SE1 1EP. Tel. (71) 717 1224. Fax: (71) 717 1240. Outspoken campaign and research organization that deals with issues connected with human rights in Africa (see page 8).

Latin America Bureau 1 Amwell Street, London EC1R IUL. Tel: (71) 278. Fax: (71) 278 0165. Research, publishing and education on Latin America and the Caribbean (see page 14).

Minority Rights Group 379 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE. Tel: (71) 978 9498. Fax: (71) 738 6265. Highlights the issues of minorities worldwide.

Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) PO Box 342, London WC1X ODU. Tel: (71) 833 3912. Campaigns against discrimination and for equality in law for lesbians and gays. (see page 28).

US

Amnesty International 322 Eighth Avenue, 10th floor, New York. NY 10001. Tel: (212) 807 8400. Campaigns for human rights worldwide (see pages 4, 20 and 24).

Greenpeace USA 1436 U St. NW, Washington DC. Tel : (202) 783 7400. Tackles multinational corporations and governments in its high-profile campaigns for the environment (see page 26).

National Congress of American Indians 900 Pennsylvania Ave, Washington DC 20003. Tel: (202) 546 9404 (see page 14).

MEXICO

Uncivil society

Assassination brings turmoil

THE assassination in northern Mexico of Luis Donaldo Colosio, the candidate of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and front-runner for presidential elections this summer, has thrown the country into turmoil. US business interests have $60 billion invested in the country and a sharp dip on Wall Street followed Colosio's assassination. The US Government promptly agreed a $6 billion package to stabilize money markets in Mexico City.

CITLALI ROVIROSA MADRAZO

A refugee from the Chiapas town of Altamirano (above); EZLN negotiators at work in San Cristóbal cathedral (below).

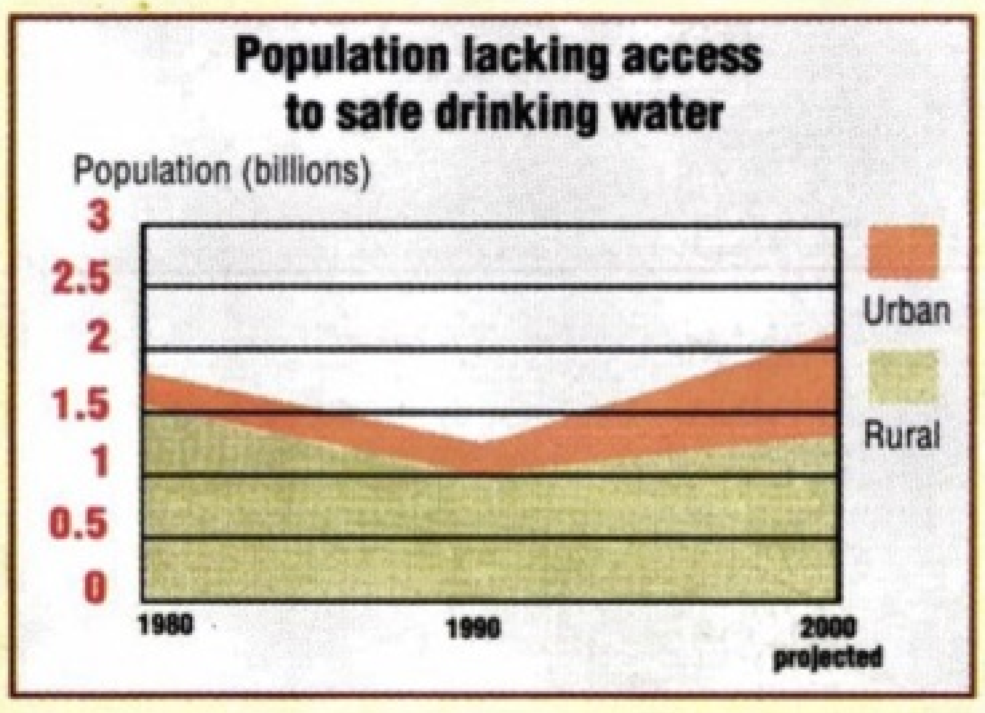
Negotiations in the south between the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) and the Mexican Government following the Chiapas uprising were disrupted. The Government's negotiator, Manuel Camacho Solis, had been one of Colosio's chief rivals for the PRI presidential nomination and was highly critical of his campaign. The day before the assassination Camacho denied he had any intention of standing for the presidency himself, despite persistent rumours to the contrary.

All of this obscured the intense interest with which Mexicans had been following the negotiation process and the EZLN's demands. Their spokesperson, 'Subcomandante Marcos', became something of a national celebrity. In the cathedral in San Cristóbal de las Casas where the negotiations were taking place he asserted that: 'We do not want power. We are not asking the army to surrender or grant us power. We are not even after a Governorship, an Embassy or the Presidency. So why should we become a political party? Aren't there enough in the country already?... What we want is very simple. It is called justice, democracy and freedom.' At the heart of the EZLN demands are land, ethnic recognition, autonomy for the Indians and the protection of human rights.

Mexican non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had, at the request of the EZLN, been drawn deeply into the negotiation process. According to Subcomandante Marcos they have become 'a fundamental part of the movement for peace, a peace with dignity for those of us who have nothing and who found ourselves forced to take up arms to make ourselves heard... We decided to trust our lives and freedom to the NGOs because in them we have seen the future to which we aspire. A future in which civil society... makes wars and armies unnecessary; a future when governments, whatever their political persuasion, will be constantly watched over by the vigilance of a democratic and free society.'

The concern must be that the conciliatory attitude so far shown by President Salinas towards the EZLN – and towards the widespread grievances they have come to represent – will endure only until the presidential elections are over in August. There could then be a return to the brutal repression with which the uprising was initially met by the Mexican Army. ■

Citlali Rovirosa Madrazo/David Ransom



Mega-slums

By the year 2000 there will be 23 cities in the world with at least 10 million people and 18 of them will be in developing countries. At least half of their inhabitants will live in crowded tenements, shantytowns and slums without basic amenities. A new report calls for a radical rethink. Instead of deploring city growth and dismissing the new urbanites as rural people in the wrong place, it wants policy-makers to recognize the capacities of slum dwellers to provide their own amenities.

Mega-Slums: the coming sanitary crisis, by Maggie Black, from WaterAid, 1 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9BT.

Riding the escalator

Residents of Victoria Peak, one of Hong Kong's most desirable addresses, can now descend from the 'mid-levels' to the central business districts in only 20 minutes using the $26.37 million Hillside Escalator Link, the longest stretch of escalators and travelators in the world. The link is a reversible one-way system with an adjacent path and steps to let people enter and leave at various points. Business-bound residents can travel down from The Peak between 6.00am and 10.00am and back up between 10.00am and 10.00pm – and avoid the congestion on the narrow road. The new walkway will attract 26,000 people a day because it is fast, free, has multiple entry points and is not locked into a schedule as are buses and trams.

Consumer Currents, No 162

Cash to spare

Three 12-year-old boys found a $150 million cheque and handed it to the police. Coutts, bankers to Her Majesty the Queen, rewarded them with $15 each.

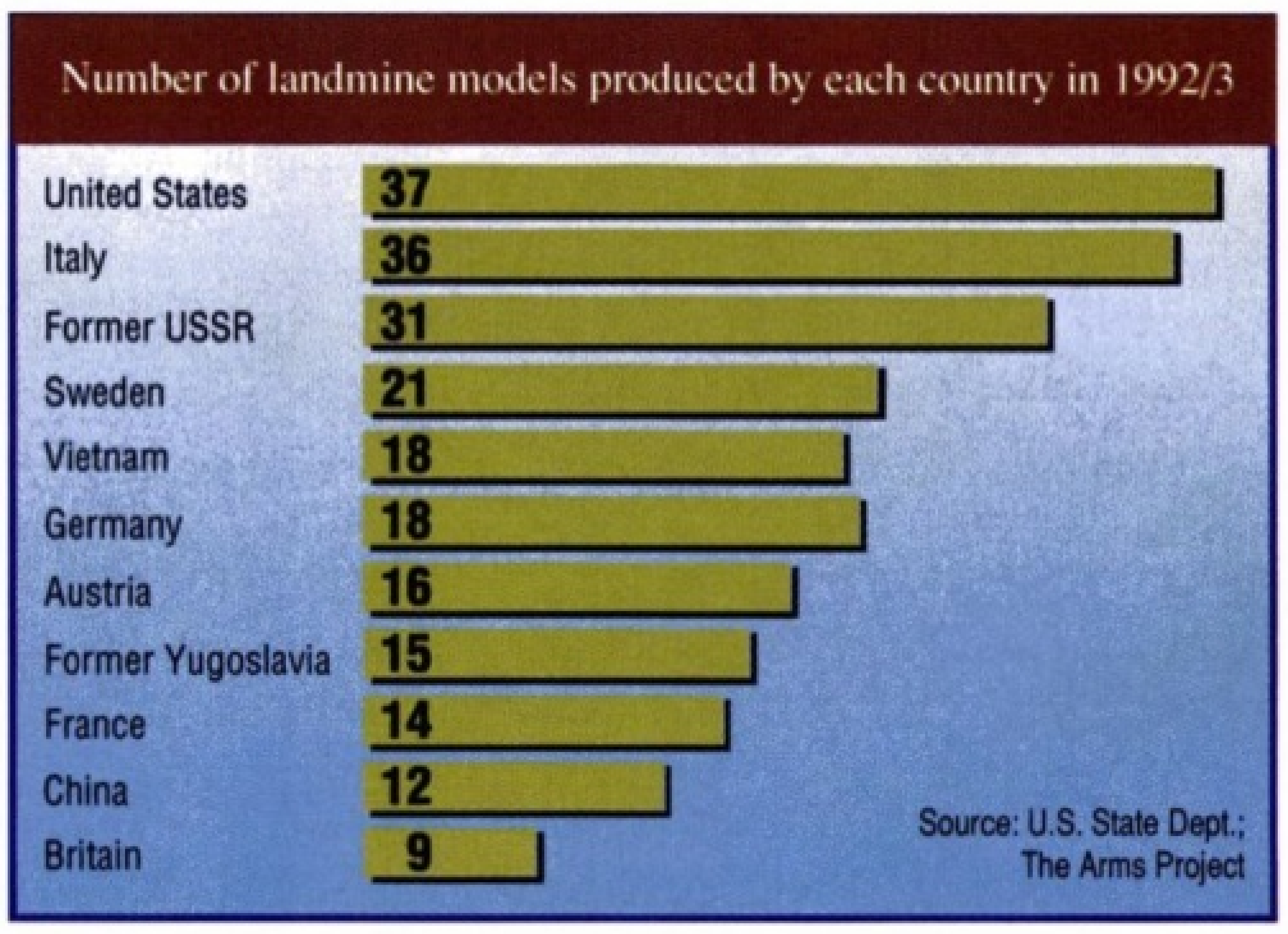
The Economist, Vol 330, No 7854

CITLALI ROVIROSA MADRAZO

SPECIAL REPORT – LANDMINES

Deadly legacy

‘Anti-personnel’ devices have been sown in vast numbers around the world. Mounting efforts are now being made to get them banned.



Among the world's producers Italy is one of the largest. In 1991 Valsella (half-owned by Fiat) was convicted of illegally selling arms to Iraq, including some nine million anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. During the 1980s Britain's Thorn EMI sold one million of its Ranger scatterable mines to four unspecified nations.

‘THE accident happened near our house in Mandera. I picked up the mine and showed it to my cousin Zeinab. She asked what it was. I said I thought it was a mine or a hand-grenade. My cousin pulled some kind of plug. We immediately saw some smoke. Zeinab ran and there was a big explosion. It hit me full in the face.’

Hinda Yassin Warsame, aged nine, was injured by a mine on 20 June 1992 in Somaliland. Her chin was broken, her face badly damaged and the lower part of her tongue torn off. She is just one among an estimated one million people, many of them children, who have become casualties of ‘anti-personnel’ mines during the past 15 years. And the carnage continues: somewhere between 400 and 800 people worldwide are still being maimed or killed by them every month.

There are now some 100 million such devices scattered over the land in 62 different countries around the world. The only continents left entirely free of them are Australasia and Antarctica.

What makes this situation particularly alarming is that landmines have become cheaper, easier to use and harder to detect. They have an indefinite lifespan and, unless painstakingly cleared, will continue to pose a threat to civilian populations for many years to come.

Half a century after the battle of El Alamein in North Africa, Egyptian Bedouin still avoid what they call the ‘fields of the devil’ – 75,000 square kilometres of exceptionally thick minefields laid by the British. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that in Afghanistan 27 UN teams clearing 30 square kilometres of minefields a year would take 4,300 years to clear just 20 per cent of Afghan territory.

Even in the Malvinas/Falkland Islands mines remain uncleared 12 years after the war. Because they are made largely of plastic they have proved almost impossible to detect. Sheep have been driven across the minefields in a vain effort to detonate the mines. The UK Government has offered a reward for anyone who can resolve the problem – a reward that so far remains unclaimed, although there are hopes that new microwave technology might prove effective. In the meantime the minefields have simply been abandoned behind fences and warning notices.

Yet despite international agreements and mounting concern, mines are still being manufactured and laid at a rate of between five and ten million a year. Reports suggest that as many as 60,000 mines were at one point being laid every week in the former Yugoslavia. There are 78 different producers of ‘anti-personnel’ devices in 44 countries making some 307 different products in all. For the most part the manufacturers are in the North and the victims in the South.

Africa is probably the worst-affected continent with as many as 30 million mines spread across 18 different countries. In Mozambique, after 18 years of civil war, two million landmines have made all 28 major roads unusable. US officials put the number of mines sown during the continuing war in Angola at nine million, but British Army engineers reckon the figure is probably double that.

Possibly the worst-affected single country is Afghanistan, where experts believe at least nine million mines have been left in the ground, but one official estimate in the US has put the figure at 60 million. Cambodia is hardly more fortunate. Between four and seven million mines, perhaps one for every Cambodian, have produced 30,000 amputees, the largest number in the world per head of the population.

The scale of human suffering that has resulted is hard to imagine. Children are particularly vulnerable – unaware of the dangers and difficult to restrict to safe areas. One report tells of a girl in Somalia who was tethered all day to a tree so that she could not stray onto mined land. In Cambodia many of the 350,000 refugees in border camps cannot find homes because the vast areas of land that have been infested with mines are unusable. Fear of mines is one reason why 3.5 million Afghan refugees do not return to their homes.

Quite apart from the horrific injuries to the victims, a huge extra burden has fallen on health-care services and civilian communities in what are often war-torn and impoverished regions. Large areas of potentially productive farm land have become unusable, exacerbating already severe problems of food supply.

Mines produce damage either by blast or by penetration of metallic fragments. The variable extent of damage to the human body makes surgery difficult. Few surgeons in the world have experience and skill in dealing with such wounds. Double-limb amputees are usually confined to wheelchairs, if there are any; otherwise many become beggars.

The principle reason mines go uncleared is cost. The bill for a worldwide clean-up is

NIC DUNLOP

estimated at $85 billion. The UN requested $20 million for Afghanistan but received only half that amount; in Cambodia $10 million and received only $3 million. In the financial year 1993-94 the US budgeted $10 million for mine clearance, while between 1986 and 1991 Washington sent an estimated $250 million to UNITA in Angola, one of the groups chiefly responsible for laying the mines that now litter that country.

Millions of mines continue to be produced and sold precisely because they are so cheap and easy to use. In Cambodia they are called 'eternal sentinels'. 'Mines may be described as fighters that never miss, strike blindly, do not carry weapons openly and go on killing long after hostilities are ended,' says one former delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross. The devices can cost as little as $6 and can be scattered almost literally like seeds.

A groundswell of international opinion has, however, been rising against the trade. The US Congress has imposed a ban on the 'sale, export and transfer of landmines' which lasts until November 1996. France has imposed a moratorium and called for a conference under the 1980 Landmines Protocol. In October 1993 Belgium and the EC, with 88 co-sponsors, introduced a resolution at the UN General Assembly calling for a concerted programme of mine clearance. In December 1993 a non-binding motion was passed by the General Assembly asking for sales to be stopped. The UK Government, however, does not favour a ban. The Foreign Office in London believes that 'more sophisticated forms of landmine, which decay or self-destruct, can be a legitimate means of self defence in the right hands'.

Vigorous lobbying is going to be needed to get the best intentions translated into practice: an urgent clean-up programme and an effective ban on the manufacture as well as on the international trade in the devices. ■

Paul Donovan

Contacts: *Aotearoa/New Zealand:* J Head, UN Association of New Zealand, PO Box 11 – 750, Betty Campbell Complex, Wakefield Street, Wellington; **Australia**: Andre Frankovitz, Human Rights Council of Australia, PO Box 182, Glebe, NSW 2037; **Canada/US**: Jody Williams, Vietnam Veterans of America, 2001 S Street NW, Suite 740, Washington DC 2009; **UK**: Mines Advisory Group, 55a Main Street, Cockermouth, Cumbria, CA13 9LU.

Worth reading: *Landmines: a deadly legacy*, from Publications Department, Human Rights Watch, 485 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10017; *War of the mines,* by Paul Davies and Nic Dunlop, Pluto Press, 345 Archway Road, London N6 5AA (forthcoming); *Mines: a perverse use of technology*, from ICRC publications, 19 Avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva; *Violent deeds live on – Landmines in Somalia and Somaliland,* African Rights, and the Mines Advisory Group (see 'Contacts' above for address).

Destruction on the doorstep of a Cambodian village (below) leaves artificial limbs in demand (right).

NIC DUNLOP

Slick oil

Following constitutional developments marking the end of apartheid rule in South Africa the UN-imposed oil embargo has been lifted. But throughout the embargo years oil giants Shell and Total in South Africa had not imported their oil via the state procurement agency, but from other sources, thus circumventing the embargo. Shell SA admitted to this but would not reveal whether it had obtained oil from Shell companies abroad.

Newsletter on the Oil Embargo against South Africa, No 33 from Weekly Mail, South Africa, 21 May 1993.

The writing on the wall

The Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Michigan, has come up with an anti-graffiti coating that is even more slippery than Teflon, the coating applied to nonstick frying pans and cooking utensils. 'If you put paint on it, it just forms globules that you can wipe off with a cloth,' explains Don Schmidt, a Dow scientist who developed the coating in his spare time. The transparent material might also be used to stop barnacles building up on ships' hulls, ice forming on aircraft and insects sticking to cars.

New Scientist, No 1916

END

END Quote

The stone in the water does not know how hot the hill is, parched by the sun.

Nigerian Proverb

Protest with a touch of salsa: Colombia's Candela play against debt.

music

Sekunjalo: Now is the Time

by **Various** *(Mango CD/MC CIDM 1110/MCT 1110)*

Freedom from Debt: Volume 2

by **Various** *(WDM CD 002)*

By the time this issue of **NI** reaches you, the first democratic election in South Africa will have been held – an event without parallel in the country's history. **Sekunjalo** – the first album to be given official endorsement by the ANC – is something of a landmark too.

The album has its sights set firmly on an international market. It is masterfully produced and its predominantly English language lyrics and music – much of which takes a sophisticated, Africanized soul as its base point – reflect this. Among the 12 contributing artists it is jazz trumpeter Hugh Masekela whose name is probably best known. *Come on Everybody* is a slow, bluesy number which contrasts dramatically with the prevalent party mood of the rest of the album. Its lyrics take note of both South Africa's violent history and the continuing violence in the rest of Africa.

Masekela puts the album into a context that transcends celebration. However, **Sekunjalo**'s range of performers – many of them stars in their domestic market – reflects the country's diversity and the desire for peace. Jennifer Ferguson, whose *Bread and Roses* is a light soul song, is an Afrikaans singer who sang at Chris Hani's vigil, while Lebo Morake, from Soweto, uses a mix of rap and highlife to send *Set Them Free* onto the dance floors.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

Considering the serious subject matter behind **Freedom from Debt**'s second compilation album, it's salutary that all 11 songs are united in up-tempo mood. The album which is put together by Britain's leading campaigners for world development concerns itself with Third World debt. Its sleeve notes describe the cosy relationship that high-street banks have with the perpetuation of debt.

The artists represented on **Debt 2** – and they include Candela, Abdul Tee-Jay's Rokoto, Le Zagazougou and Black Umfolosi – encompass a variety of styles. Zimbabwe's Umfolosi specialize in a sonorous male voice acapella rooted in traditional song structures; Africando's salsa is informed by the music's African heritage while the women of Colombia's Candela have chosen a Celina Gonzalez salsa song and whipped it up into a form that could incite anyone to wild dancing. Jig-antic's *Jiganema* begins and ends with a scuttling Irish tune, but its middle is stuffed with a loose jazz. Doctors of Dub meanwhile use the empty dub spaces of reggae's most experimental form to explore other sounds which include jazz improvisation. A relaxed atmosphere pervades the album, which is nevertheless capable of a few surprises. Zubop's *Cumbia Konstanza* has a swing that at first, second and third hearings seems to have absorbed something of the quick arpeggios characteristic of Jewish *klezmer* music. Zubop are well-established on London's live circuit so perhaps this influence is not inconceivable. In the end it hardly matters; Zubop, like the other artists on this record, make music that cannot be bounded in simple terms. In this, theirs is an international outlook and so too is this album. Profits and royalties from both albums go to benefit the ANC and WDM respectively.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

books

Tears of the crocodile

by **Neil Middleton, Phil O'Keefe and Sam Moyo**
(Pluto Press ISBN 0 7453 0765 5 pb)

The road from Rio

by **Michael McCoy and Patrick McCully**
(International Books WISE ISBN 90 6224 991 4 pb)

Rescue Mission: Planet Earth

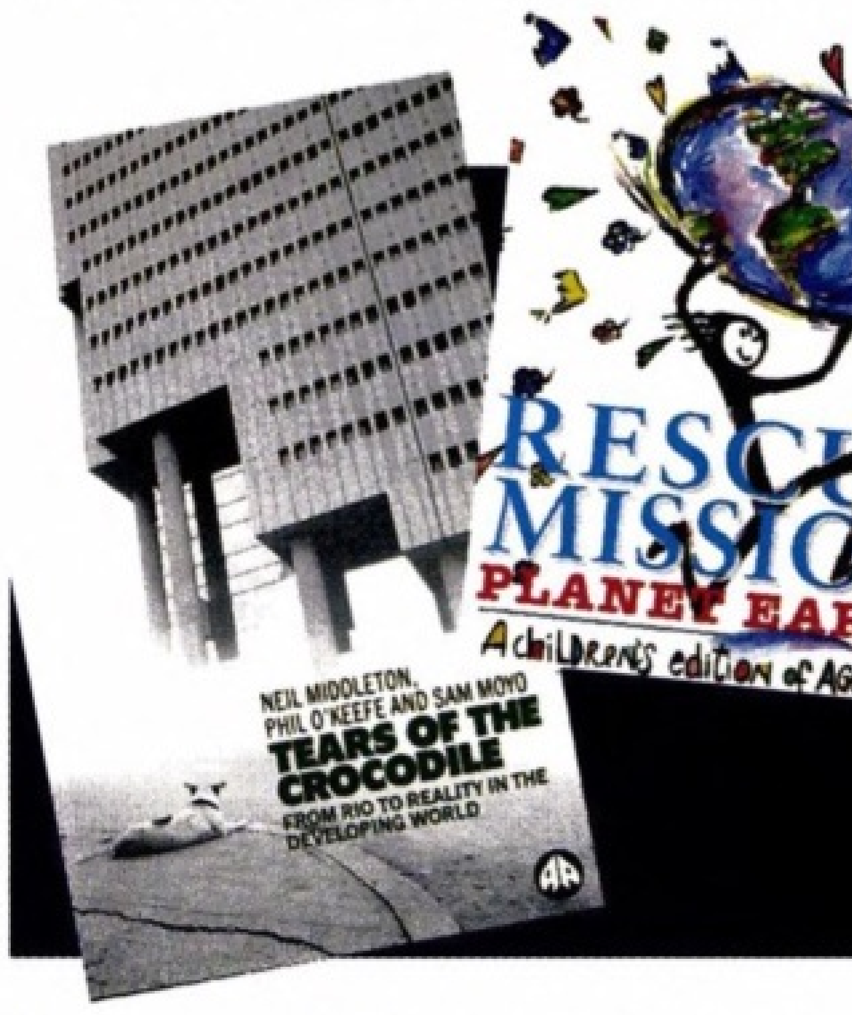
A Children's Edition of Agenda 21
(Kingfisher Books ISBN 1-85697-175-9)

Two years on from the Earth Summit in Rio and with every passing day the wisdom of hindsight suggests more insistently that the sceptics were right.

The environment may be well established on the international agenda, but that agenda is more firmly in the hands of the boardroom brokers whose projects are primarily responsible for whatever environmental mess we're in. Now the brokers have been joined round the boardroom table by a sizeable chunk of the supposedly independent organizations that claim to represent the environmental movement.

Agenda 21 is what the Summit gave us, and it's been aptly dubbed by Wolfgang Sachs as 'perhaps the most perfect example of the arrogance of the development era', calling as it does for Western science and management to intervene ever more directly in almost all aspects of human activity. You can get a whiff of this from James Gustav Speth, President of the World Resources Institute and one of the members of the Organizing Committee of the post-Summit 'Earth Council', which is heavily funded by multinational corporations. He is quoted as saying that the Earth Council 'aspires to build a planetary constituency'. On the principle that whoever pays the piper calls the tune, that 'constituency' is not for the environment but for the multinational corporations.

These three books all take the Earth Summit as their point of reference: **Tears of the Crocodile** with sharp analysis of the issues, **The Road from Rio** with a helpful summary of the practical implications for campaigning groups, **Rescue Mission** with a lively and visually very appealing run round the issues for children. But they don't chart the course of environmental events since the Summit, or suggest whether it made much difference. As yet there's little hard evidence on which to base such a judgement. The alarming thing is that by the time we do have the evidence it may well be too late.


RESCUE MISSION
PLANET EARTH
A children's edition of Agenda 21
NEIL MIDDLETON, PHIL O'KEEFE AND SAM MOYO
TEARS OF THE CROCODILE
FROM RIO TO REALITY IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

What you do get, however, is a restatement of some basic principles – and of the need for a genuinely independent environmental movement to pursue them. This is both timely and welcome. You have to read books like these to remind yourself that the substantive environmental issues remain in a critical state and to provide a framework for change.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
(Rescue Mission ☆☆**)**
Entertainment ☆☆
(Rescue Mission ☆☆☆☆**)**

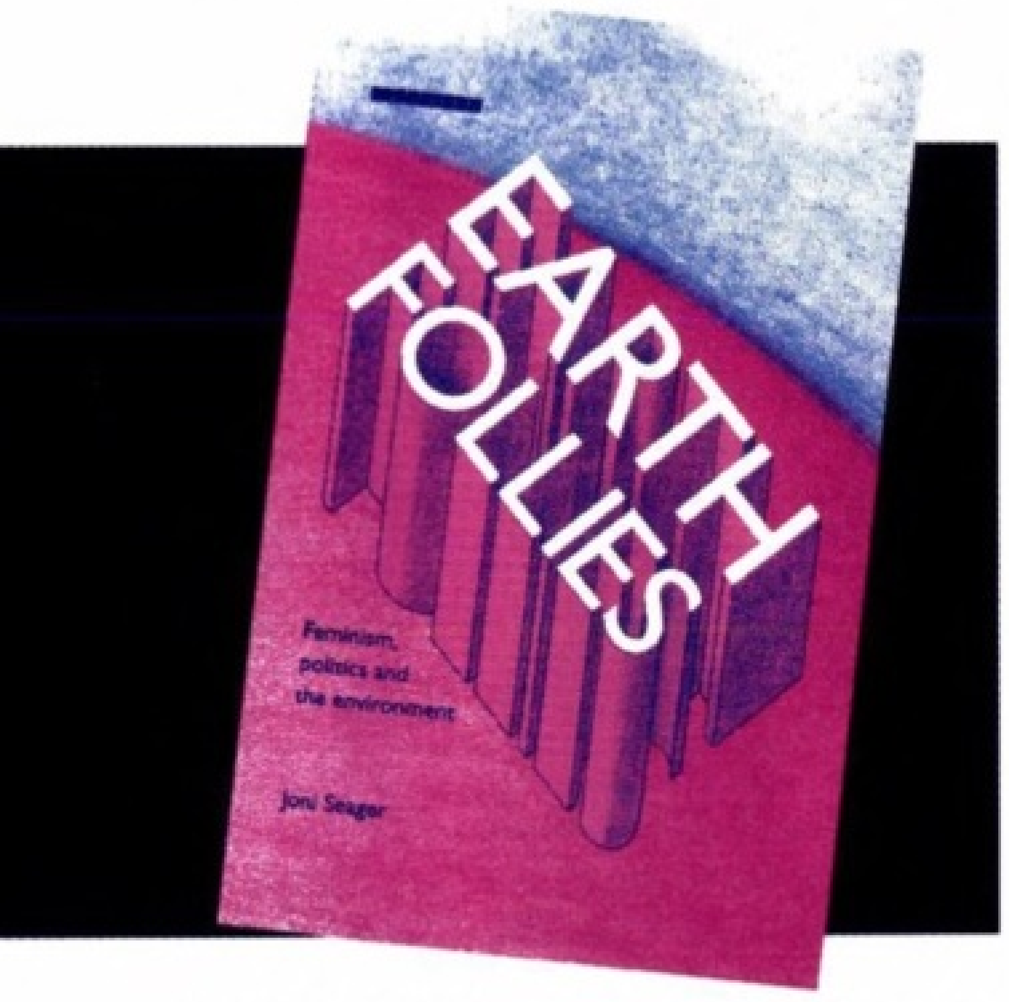
Earth Follies

by **Joni Seager**
(Earthscan ISBN 1-85383 - 166 -2)

From its shocking pink jacket onwards this book vigorously escapes the 'worthy but dull' tendency that dogs so much writing on the environment. **Earth Follies** combines a riveting feminist critique with an international perspective and a sense of humour. It can be read right through but is reader-friendly enough to survive dipping into. You may just want to start by reading the cartoons, ads and captions!

Radical geographer Joni Seager clearly points the finger of blame at who and what is destroying the environment – but also gives the cultural and political reasons they continue getting away with it.

Her argument hinges on the central idea of 'agency': who is responsible and why. It's no big surprise that those most responsible are the powerful institutions which shape modern life – governments, the military, the multinational corporations. But what often fails to get properly analyzed is that these institutions are overwhelmingly controlled by men and dominated by masculine presumptions.



The military-industrial complex – the most cavalier polluter of all – is an obvious target for Seager. But she also addresses trickier issues, like the double-edged sword of 'green consumerism'. And the green movement itself does not escape criticism – especially for some of its racist and sexist tendencies.

But Seager does not just criticize. **Earth Follies** makes positive proposals for building green politics from the movement, from its grassroots activism. She concludes that feminist analysis is not the *only* tool necessary for making sense of the environmental crisis – but it's one we can't do without.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

THE *classic*

The Bloody Chamber

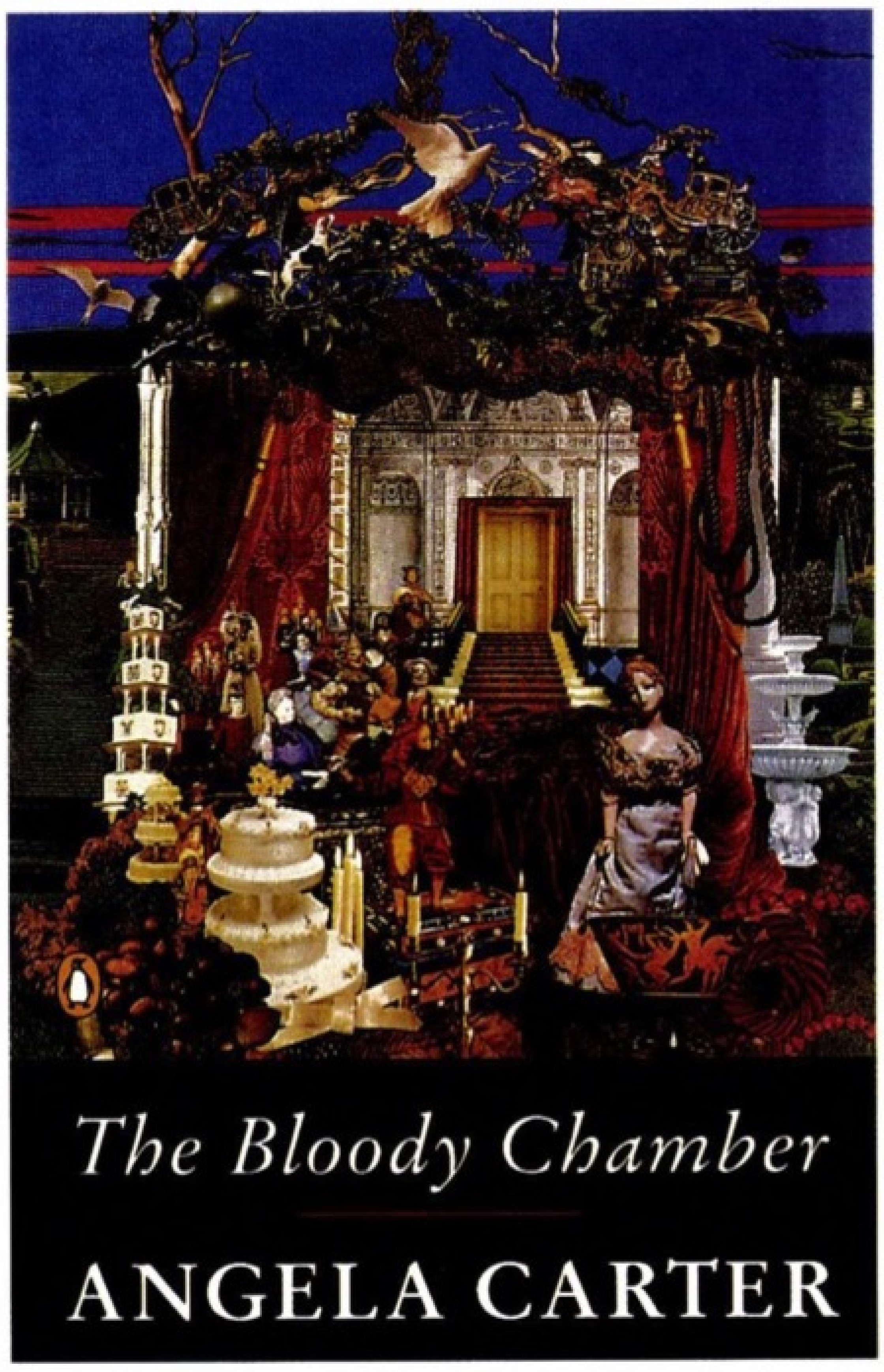
...being the book that turned the telling of fairy-tales into an act of subversion.

LIKE everyone else in the West, I grew up with them: the tales of curious virgins, mysterious heroes, vampires, witches and werewolves. We heard them as fairytales in our childhood, saw them again as the vampire films of the 1950s, but I thought I had mainly forgotten them until I picked up a remarkable book.

In **The Bloody Chamber** Angela Carter reworks some of the West's best known fairy-tales, transforming them with brilliantly baroque imagery and from a perspective that owes almost as much to Freud as it does to feminism.

In the first and the longest story of the collection – *The Bloody Chamber* – the virgin protagonist is transported in a tender, delicious ecstasy of excitement, 'into the unguessable country of marriage'. It's a familiar tale – that of Bluebeard's Castle – and one which could be taking place at any time in history or anywhere throughout the world where the woman marries into a strong patriarchy and gives herself up to powerlessness.

As a child the Bluebeard tale left me with the moral that 'nasty things would happen to girls who were too curious'. In Carter's reworking things happen rather differently. The new bride unlocks the secret chamber and finds the bodies of Bluebeard's earlier wives. As she puts it: 'I only did what he knew I would'. And as the story unfolds she knows that her impending doom is not merely a punishment for disobedience: the castle is stuffed with the trappings of power turning into sadism, and tales of the ancestral family's murderous woman-hunts are whispered through the neighbourhood. Our protagonist knows that she is in the hands of a psychopath and she is saved because she is crafty enough to play for time and because her mother tucks up her skirts, gallops up and rescues her. It's a fine feminist departure from the traditional tale in which the vulnerable damsel is saved by some burly male. Carter's women are allowed a vigour that enables them to save themselves or rescue each other.



They also experience sexual desire. The central character of *The Bloody Chamber* realizes that the Bluebeard character was drawn to marry her because 'I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption that took my breath away'. Carter explores the tale's inherent sado-masochism. In her husband's secret drawer the bride finds a note from a murdered wife proclaiming: 'The supreme and unique pleasure of love is the certainty that one is doing evil'. As soon as this patriarch persuades his wives to join in the fun he punishes them with death.

In the world in which we grow up, women are currency: 'My father lost me to The Beast at cards' begins *The Tiger's Bride*. When she rides out with the beasts, she notes: 'The six of us – mounts and riders, both – could boast amongst us not one soul... since all the best religions in the world state categorically that not beasts nor women were equipped with the flimsy, insubstantial things'. Small wonder then that she chooses to become a beast herself, sending back to her father the obedient clockwork maid 'to perform the part of my father's daughter'.

In this collection, questions of women's sexuality come up time and time again. At times Carter's work seems to come close to pornography. Published in 1979, this book looks more closely at women's sexual liberation and orgasm than most writers do today.

So what can a woman's life and her sexuality be? With Carter it is not always clear. Take the case of her Little Red Riding Hood, pubescent and as fearless as the handsome werewolf she longs to kiss. This tantalizing tale ends at its climax, and I still don't know what the moral of it is. But perhaps the wish to find a 'moral' is suspect. Perhaps, in the relatively liberated late twentieth century we should be reading the old tales quite differently. Angela Carter gives us a chance to do so. ■

Carol Fewster

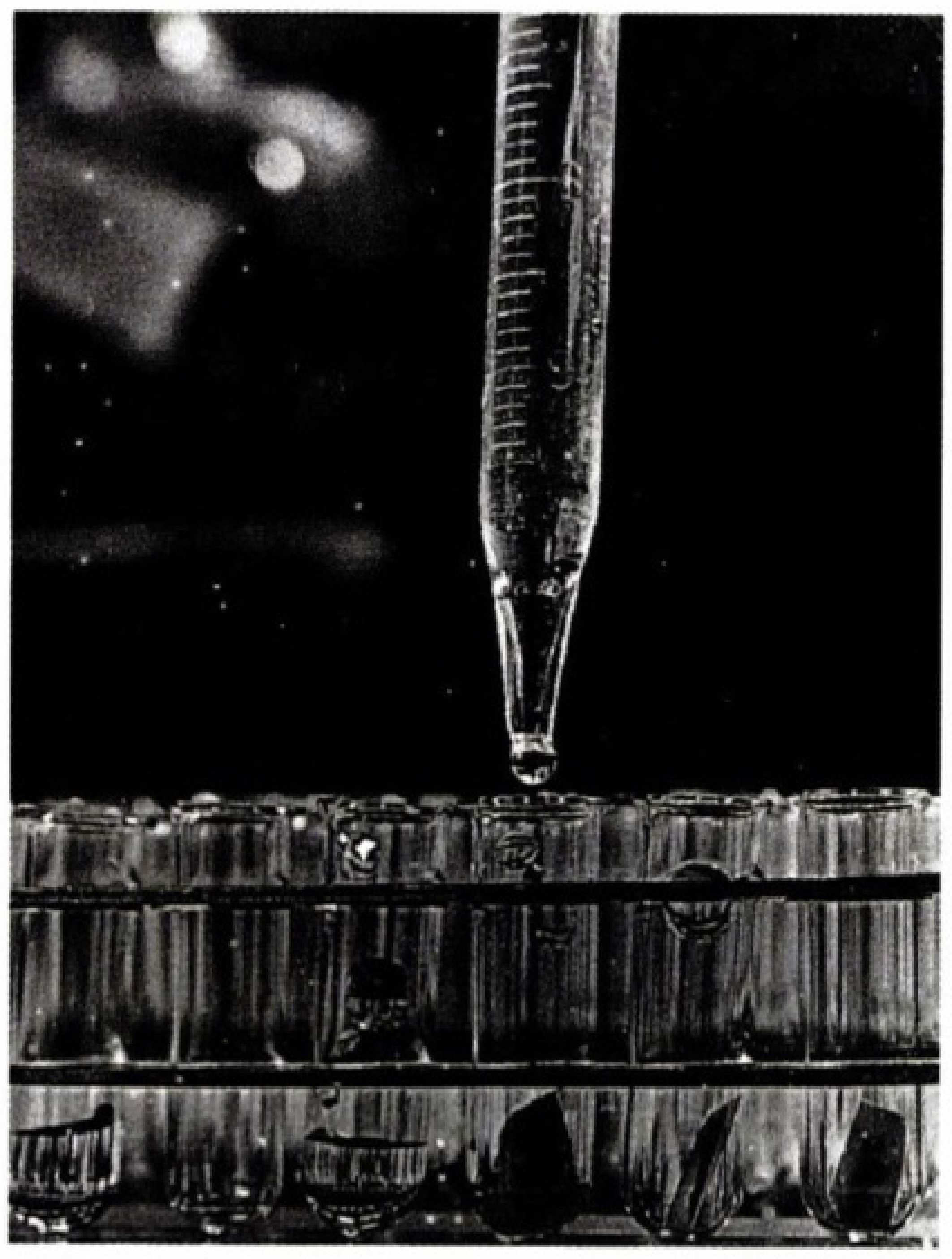
***The Bloody Chamber and other stories** is published by King Penguin, 1979.*

QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'Curiosities'.

Can anyone tell me where I can find information about a drug called 'Filon' which was withdrawn by the National Health Service in Britain around 1974/5?

I suggest that the questioner go to a large public library, such as the new British Library in London's Euston Road, and seek the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries (ABPI) data sheet compendium for the years when the drug might have been in use. The Data Sheet compendia are collections of data on all generally available drugs in a given year. The task will be rendered much easier if you know which drug company manufactured Filon. The company will still hold data sheets for the drug – even if the company has been merged with others since the 1970s.


SPOONER

Testing drugs for contamination.

Dr JS Barrett
London, UK

Has anyone published a list of products and services that can be bought without doing harm to babies, animals, human rights and so on?

Publications produced by the charity New Consumer are very useful. Their titles include *Changing Corporate Values* (Kogan Page, 1991), a widely acclaimed and very detailed reference book on business and social responsibility. *Shopping for a Better World* is cheaper and handier (Kogan Page, 1991). Their *Good Employers Guide* (Kogan Page, 1992) is specially for those thinking of taking their first job in industry, the professions or public service but wondering how their personal values will fit in with the ethos of the organization they are hoping to join. New Consumer's address is: 52 Elswick Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE43 6JH.

Jill Hancock
Bristol, UK

Why are Australians called 'diggers'?

I have an alternative explanation to those already published in **NI.** Australian soldiers began to refer to themselves as 'diggers' soon after the Gallipoli landings in 1915. The Allied Forces were suffering very heavy casualties as they crossed open beaches and advanced up bare inclines to attack the fortified and prepared Turks. General Sir Ian Hamilton, realizing that his forces would be wiped out unless they entrenched themselves, similarly exhorted them to: 'Dig, dig, dig until you are safe'. Since that time the term has become synonymous with the Australian soldier, but much less so for the general population. In ordinary usage in Australia the term is about as common as, I imagine, 'me old cock-sparrer' in England.

Ric Boyd
Jolimont, Australia

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

I've heard the hole in the ozone layer is getting smaller. Is this true?

Becky Arkwright
Vancouver, Canada

Is it true that during mating the male duck will sometimes drown – and kill – the female?

Rhona Mathews
Cardiff, Cymru, UK

Can anyone explain to me why we have managed to have women prime ministers in India and Pakistan and still have deplorable treatment of women?

Ashoni Arora
Queensland, Australia

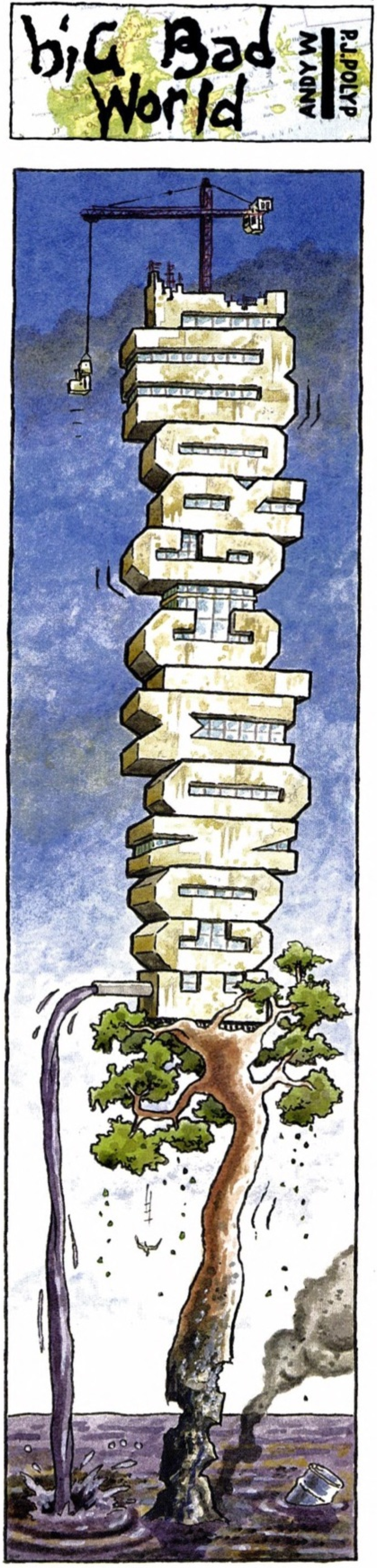
Where is Judy Chicago's installation *The Dinner Party* now?

Alison Reid
Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada

Is there an index on charity organizations which rates them according to political bias, bureaucracy, mismanagement, wastage, quality of information and the like?

Andrew Young
Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

If you have any questions or answers please send them to Curiosities, **New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK,** or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).



GI Joe, Barbie, Ken and men

***Steven Hill** connects competitive economics and competitive sex.*

When I was eight or nine, like most boys my age, I received one Christmas the obligatory GI Joe doll, complete with combat fatigues and M-16 rifle. My GI Joe was one rough tough character; so rough, in fact, that one day he beat up my sister's Ken doll and absconded with Barbie. My GI Joe carried off Barbie like a prized Helen of Troy. She was his prize for besting that wimp Ken, who could hardly be expected to defend the beautiful Barbie with his tennis racket, dressed in green Bermuda shorts.

Now, looking back on my dramatic play, I wonder how it was possible that a nine-year-old had figured out that role without ever having read the script.

In the carnival game of heterosexual economic relations, women are one of the prizes offered to us men for achieving 'success'. But she must not be just any woman – she must be a certain type of woman. She must be a woman who is highly desirable, worth striving and competing for. She must be a beautiful woman – a Barbie doll.

Inevitably, not all boys as they grow into men, nor all girls as they grow into women, will be able to live up to the demands of a competitive society. In a competitive society there are winners and losers: a few end up at the top, some end up at the bottom and most end up in between, desperately clawing their way towards the top to keep themselves from sinking to the bottom. This dynamic drives the economy: men and women straining to win, producing and consuming the products that make the owners of the economy rich. The ads selling those products whisper sexy messages, hinting to us how we can soothe the aching gap between our ambitions and our actual status – between wanting to be GI Joe, but feeling like Ken.

Through this gap slithers the seduction of pornography, together with mainstream media images of beauty or sex. With these images dancing in our heads we men can fantasize that we have won our prize, the beautiful woman, the Barbie doll. In the privacy of our fantasies we can temporarily reconcile our socialized craving to win, and feel dominant with our actual experience of powerlessness. Contrary to claims of a cathartic effect, these vicarious fantasies act as the *practice sessions* for real-life behavior and relationships with women.

Most significantly, this dynamic is true of *real-life* sex-beauty images – those women who attempt to conform physically to these images. A man can see a flash of Cindy Crawford-like mane out of the corner of his eye, in the grocery market or walking down the street – the painted red lips and mascaraed eyes, a smooth leg or a bit of cleavage pushing out of a low-cut blouse – and in an instant miracle of his brain he can imagine that he owns the favor of that woman, that he possesses her as an image and that therefore he must be a virile, successful man.

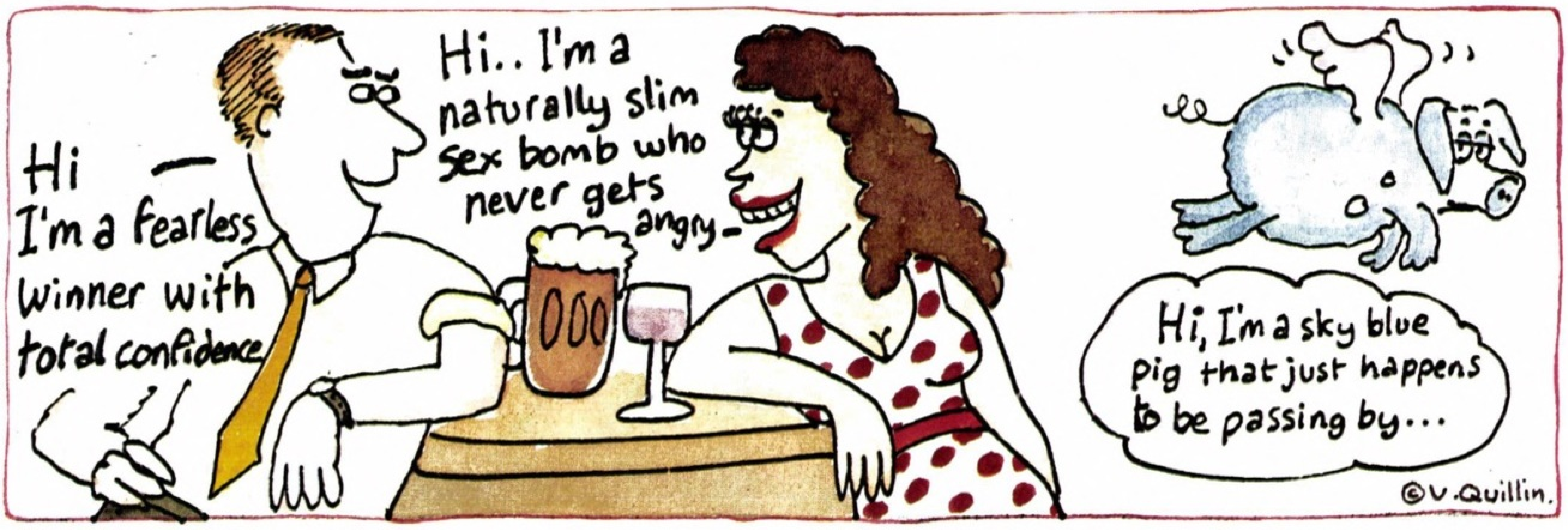
In a single day, via magazines, TV and the women we meet or know, this sort of experience can happen to a man a hundred times, instantly conveying to his cranial synapses the crude message: 'Sex-beauty image. I've won her. I am a successful man.' Relating to sex-beauty images for one's own self-approval and psychological bolstering is a subtle and addictive process. Like all addictions these 'attractions' feel immediately pleasurable and have a 'high' associated with them. Considered as a 'normal' heterosexual attraction, this sexual high is a common experience. It includes a momentary fix of approval and acceptance together with eroticized feelings of power and conquest that are invested with the authority of the culture. When combined with the orgasmic release of masturbation, the message of these images is *positively reinforced.*

Like a woman's obsession to be thin, sexy, young and beautiful – to be a Barbie – the man's physical attraction and his attempts to become the man – the GI Joe – that wins this beauty is a ritualistic exercise in an ideology. And this ideology, utilizing a series of rewards, punishments and motivational incentives – after thousands of hours of practice – re-makes the young boy into a man who is a mechanized cog in the grinding competitive machine, an obedient soldier ready to march off to military or economic war.

No wonder that, prior to bombing raids during the Gulf War, US pilots were shown films of disrobing bikini-clad women. These films were called 'motivational': 'Now I know why I'm fighting,' grinned one enthusiastic pilot.

Part of a man's need to dominate women – and other men – results from our sense of having failed to 'win' in a competitive and exploitative economic system. Once we have recognized this there is the potential to enlist women and men as allies in each other's struggles, while not giving short shrift to women's pressing issues resulting from male privilege and patriarchy. ■

Steven Hill is a freelance writer, community organizer and editor. He lives in Seattle.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Hi.. I'm a naturally slim sex bomb who never gets angry –
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VIV QUILLIN

Kenya

THERE is a striking contrast for the first-time visitor to Nairobi between the prosperity of Kenya's capital city with its tower-block landscape, and the grinding poverty that exists in the shadow of bank buildings and tourist hotels.

Kenya became independent from Britain in 1963. Under Jomo Kenyatta, the first President, agriculture became the basis of an economic 'miracle'. Good agricultural land has always been at a premium, concentrated in the fertile highlands and covering less than one-fifth of the total land area. As early as 1902 the first white settlers established their plantations here.

Those dispossessed of their land, largely the Kikuyu people, later became the driving force behind the Mau-Mau revolt that led to independence. Although initially smallholders were able to buy land cheaply from departing white settlers, land ownership is still highly concentrated. Under Kenyatta, a Kikuyu élite occupied many of the top positions in government and the civil service, maintaining privilege for the few.

The record of Kenyatta's successor, Daniel arap Moi, who took over in 1978, has been tainted by similar accusations of a lack of genuine commitment to democracy. Political dissent by opposition MPs and the press is suppressed, often violently. Economic mismanagement, government corruption and the absence of political reform led to the suspension of vital foreign aid in late 1991. The ensuing severe economic recession dealt a particularly heavy blow to the poor.

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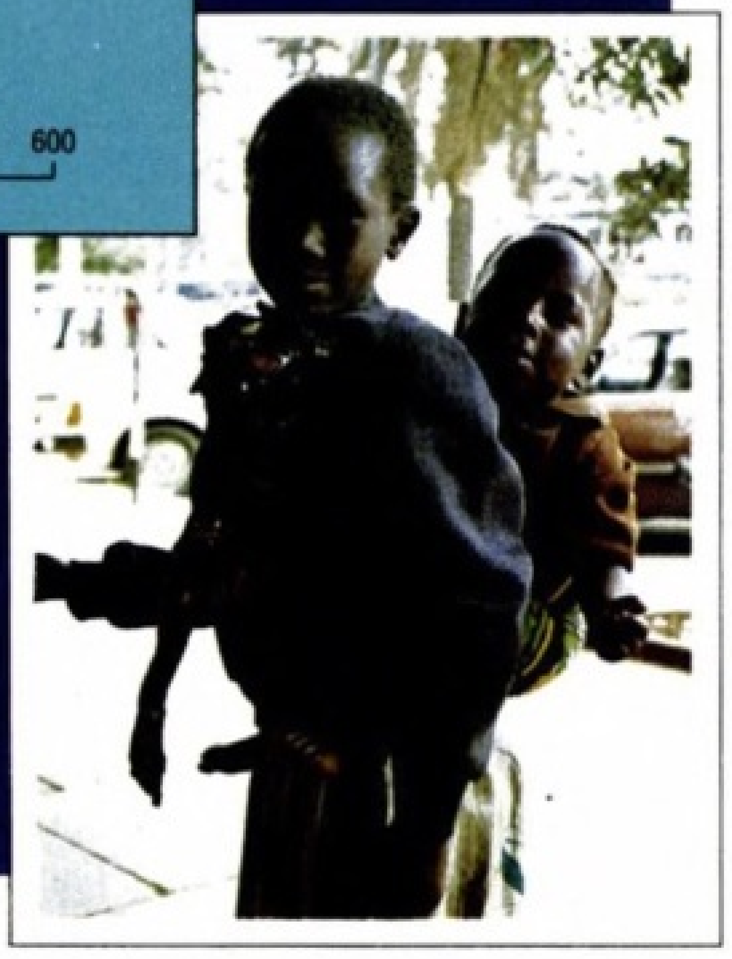

BEN OAKLEY

Karanja is typical of a growing number of urban slum dwellers. He works as a messenger for Sh 1,200 a month (about $25) but after inflation effectively slashed his real income, he can no longer afford the Sh 400 rent for his flat.

Street children and families like Kavanja's in shantytowns are a growing phenomenon in urban areas. The problem is amplified by refugees from neighbouring countries. Violence among different ethnic groups has worsened since the 1992 multi-party elections when the political parties split along tribal lines. This has forced many to flee to the towns.

Life in the rural areas is not easy, notably for women who do most of the farming. With unpredictable rains in recent years, farmers have been by turns washed out by floods and desiccated by drought. It is also quite common for men to migrate to the towns to look for paid jobs as people's priorities are cash to pay for children's secondary education. But as many as 300,000 children are estimated to be orphaned as a result of parental deaths from Aids.

Following the multi-party elections, the World Bank's agreement to resume aid included a commitment by the Government to cushion the poorest people from the effects of further economic reforms such as cuts in public spending. It remains to be seen if this rhetorical commitment will translate into real protection for the most vulnerable groups facing the deep inequalities that exist in Kenya today. ■

Ben Oakley

AT A glance

Excellent	★★★★★
Good	★★★★
Fair	★★★
Poor	★★
Appalling	★

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★

Poor suffer disproportionately from effects of economic recession.

1984 ★★

SELF-RELIANCE ★★

Exports earn less than imports cost. World Bank support resumed in 1993.

1984 ★★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★

Formal political participation low but grassroots organization growing.

1984 ★★

POLITICS

LEFT RIGHT

Centre-right. 1992 multi-party elections gave opposition parties a platform, but Moi and ruling KANU party retain power.

LEFT RIGHT

1984

ADULT LITERACY ★★★

69% (women 58%) Improving.

1984 ★★

FREEDOM ★★

Harassment of the media and political opponents.

1984 ★★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★

59 years.

1984 ★★

Leader President Daniel arap Moi
Economy GNP per capita US $340 *(US $22,240)*
Monetary unit: Kenya shilling
Main exports: Coffee, tea, fruit and vegetables, cement and sisal; tourism is main foreign exchange earner.
Main imports: Petroleum, machinery, food. Agriculture is mainstay of the economy. Food crops are maize, sorghum, cassava, beans and fruit. Cash crops are coffee, tea, sugar, cotton, pyrethrum, sisal, tobacco, pineapples and wattle.
People 25 million. Almost half of the population under 15 years old. Kenya has one of the fastest population growth rates in the world.
Health Infant mortality 51 per 1,000 live births *(US 9 per 1,000)*.
Culture About 40 ethnic groups including Samburu, Masai and Kikuyu; also significant Asian (80,000), Arab (27,000) and European (25,000) communities.
Religion: Christian, with a minority Muslim population around the coastal areas. Animism important in the lives of many Kenyans.
Languages: Swahili and English are the official languages, but Kikuyu and Luo common. English vigorously promoted, especially in schools.

Sources: *Third World Guide 93/94; The State of the World's Children 1994; World Development Report 1992; World Tables 1992; Child mortality since the 1960s, 1992; Trends in developing countries 1992; Economist Intelligence Unit 1992-3; African Development Indicators (UN) 1992.*

Last profiled in January 1984

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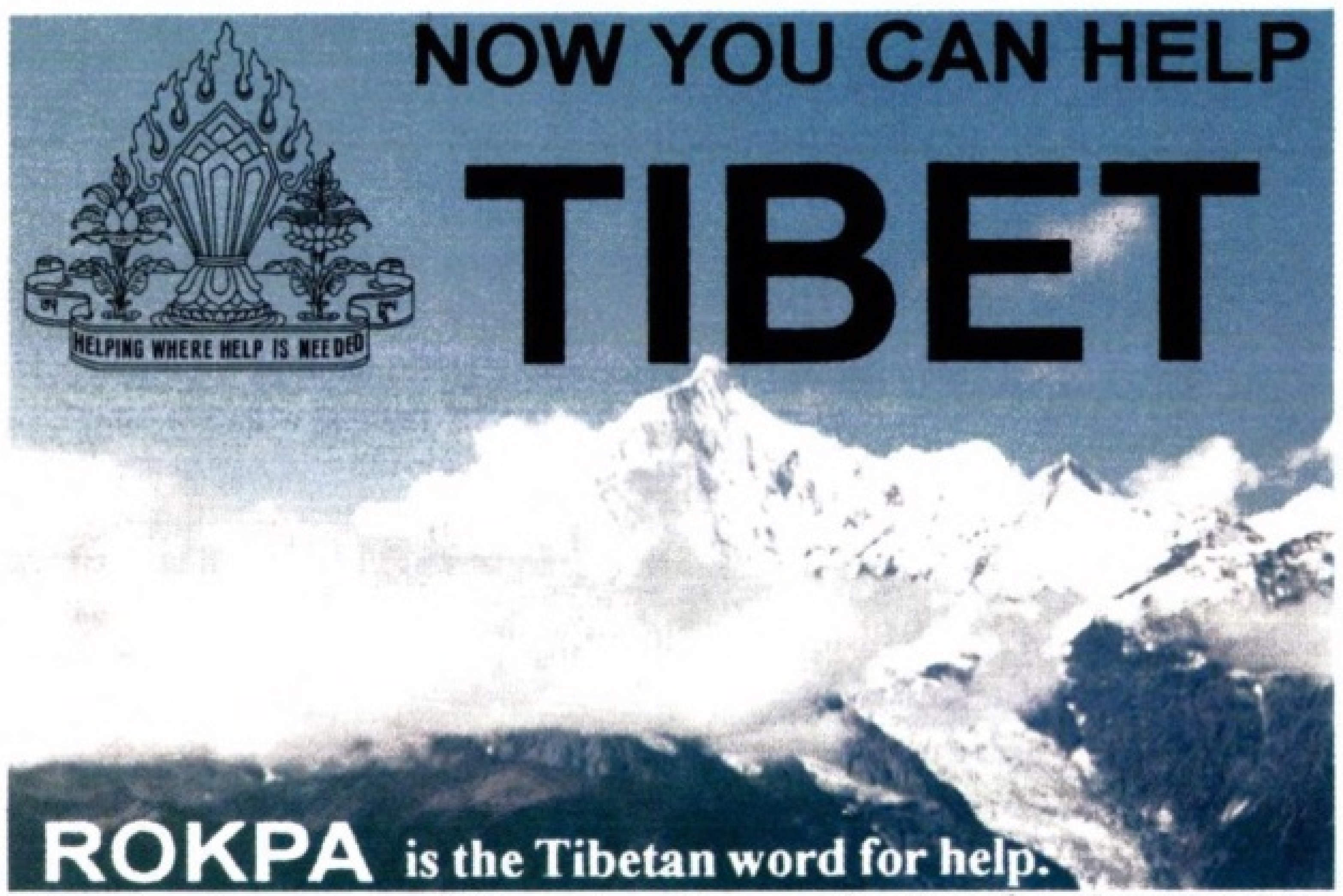
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(SUBJECT TO VALIDATION)

This one-year course integrates community drama practices with cultural studies and development theory culminating in a major practical project undertaken in the UK or overseas.

It offers students training as facilitators of cultural strategies in communication and community participation in evolving and sustaining criteria for development. The course is taught by specialists with substantial theoretical and practical experiences in various parts of the world in the fields of community drama, cultural studies and development theory and practice. It is directed at the needs of development agencies working in the UK and overseas. So far, it is the first course in Europe that offers an advanced forum for students from the North and South jointly to evolve the use of community drama as a tool for development in local and global contexts.

The college also offers an MA in Television for Development.

Write for details to: **The Admissions Officer,**
King Alfred's College, Sparkford Road, Winchester, Hampshire SO22 4NR
Fax: +44 (0) 962 842280

LSE

Study Media Communications in London

A one-year MSc in Media Communications is offered by the London School of Economics and Political Science, one of Europe's leading and most cosmopolitan centres for research and advanced study in the social sciences. The programme draws on LSE's varied strengths to combine study and theories, concepts and methods in media and communications research with specialised options in a research project. Located in central London, the programme also offers the advantages of contributions from media practitioners and regulators in press, broadcasting, advertising and politics.

Programme Director: Dr. Sonia Livingstone,
Department of Social Psychology,
London School of Economics
Tel: +44 71 405 7686

For full details, please ask for the **Graduate School Prospectus,** available from: Graduate Admissions Office,
London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE
Tel: +44 71 955 7159/60 ● Fax: +44 71 831 1684 ● Telex 24655 LSELON G

University of Leicester
Centre for Mass Communication Research

MA Mass Communications

Applications are invited for this one-year full-time taught degree. Teaching is by lecture and seminar.

Core components include:–
Introduction to Mass Communication
Contemporary Issues in Media and Cultural Studies
The Study of Mass Media Audiences
Processes and Structures in Mass Communication
Research Methods and Management

With options in:–
The International Context of Mass Communication
Power Concensus and Conflict
Comparative Communications Policy
The Production and Consumption of Popular Music
Political Communication
Film for Mass Communication

Applicants should hold a good honours degree, preferably in one of the social sciences. Those with other qualifications, relevant professional experience, and those just graduating will also be considered.

MPhil/PhD (Mass Communications)
Places are also available for those with good first degrees, preferable with an MA/MSc in an appropriate subject, for degree by individually supervised study.

Teaching Staff:
Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, Roger Dickinson, James D Halloran, Anders Hansen, Olga Linné, Keith Negus, Ralph Negrine, Chris Newbold.

Further details and application forms can be obtained from: Ms C T Flint, Courses Secretary
Centre for Mass Communication Research
104 Regent Road
Leicester LE1 7LT, UK
Tel: (0533) 523863

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GREENBELT94

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AUGUST 26 – 29

ROOTS, RHYTHM, REDEMPTION

DOWN *Rooted in God, the Bible, the mystery of Christ and the irresistable call to creativity.*

RUNNING *Wrestling with our world, learning from other traditions, bursting in hope, exploding with energy.*

SINGING *Offering community, chasing peace with justice, hungry for truth, embracing reality and a spirituality for all of life.*

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all booked and lots more to come...

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Adrian Plass
Jim Wallis (USA)
Eric Delve
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Richard Harries Bishop of Oxford
David Alton MP
Paul Boateng MP
Simon Hughes MP
Raj Patel
Wilfred Wood, Bishop of Croydon
Annie McGuire
Leslie Griffiths (President of the Methodist Council)
Harcourt Blackett (Jamaica)
Paul Grant (Council of Racial Justice)
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Paul Brannen (Christian Aid)
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Adal Alexandre (Angola)

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- **Roots of Community in Britain**
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- **Rhythm of Creation**
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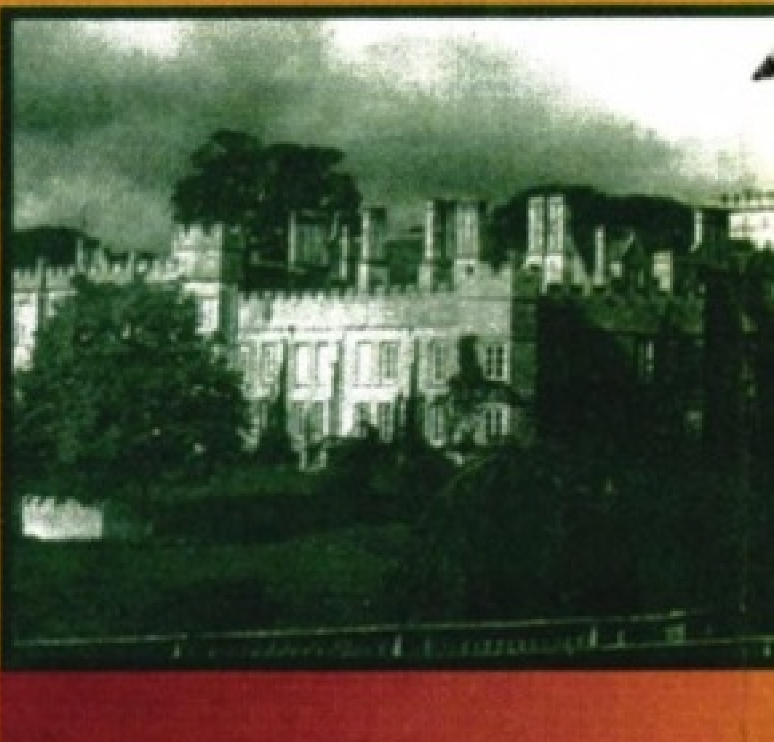

PLUS

Children's Human Rights

Special for 94 - Action for Children's Human Rights special venue for The Year of the Family, with Amnesty International, Jubilee Action, Casa Alianza and the Consortium for Street Children. Seminars, workshops, arts, music and campaigning - a chance to meet the human rights defenders, activists and artists.

For all the latest Greenbelt info call the hotline on
0891-440637
(calls are charged at 39p per minute cheap rate and 49p per minute at other times

IT'S ALL INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF YOUR TICKET – SAVE MONEY BY BOOKING IN ADVANCE

WEEKEND TICKETS BEFORE		15 Jul	Site	No.	TOTAL
a1	**Adult**	£47	£54		
c1	**Child** 16 & under	£26	£30		
s1	**Student** (see below*)	£41	£48		
p1	**Party** (10 or more adults)	£42	£49		
f1	**Family** (inc 1 child)	£97	£111		
add £4 for each additional family child					
spf1	**Single parent family**	£47	£54		
add £4 for each additional family child					
☐ Please send me: The Good Greenbelt Guide					(£2)
☐ Please send me: A list of boarding houses and hotels in the Deene Park area					
Please include Postage and packing					£1.00
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GRAND TOTAL					

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CREDIT CARD HOTLINE 071-700 1335 After 6pm and at weekends – book through Ticketmaster on 071-344 4444. Please note £2.50 booking fee on all Credit Card orders
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SMALL BUT IMPORTANT PRINT Your ticket covers camping facilities and entrance to all events on site. Advance tickets are non-refundable – tickets not issued until July '94. Children under the age of 5 are free – no ticket issued. Family tickets include children, 16 and under; sons and daughters only – no friends. UB40 holders, those on family credit or Govt. Training Schemes qualify for 50% reduction on all site prices, not available in advance. All tickets inclusive of VAT at 17.5%. Do not post cash. Acknowledgement of booking and a Ref. No. will be sent within 28 days of receipt. Please quote your Ref. No. on any future correspondance. Post this application to: Greenbelt Tickets 94, The Greenhouse, Hillmarton Road, London, N7 9JE. Ticket enquiries: 071-700 1335 ext.16. Greenbelt is a registered charity: No. 289372. It is a company Incorporated in England and Limited by Guarantee No. 1812893. VAT No. 404 596647.
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NI/6/94

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